

# Holding the Line"

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Sergeant Harold Baldwin



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Respectfully yours  
Harold Baldwin

# “Holding the Line”

By

SERGEANT HAROLD BALDWIN

Of the First Division, Canadian  
Expeditionary Forces

*With Illustrations and Diagrams*



CHICAGO  
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1918

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## Dedication

With deep affection and reverence, I humbly dedicate these reminiscences to the memory of the best pals that ever lived, and who shared with me the joys and sorrows of those never-to-be-forgotten days in France and Flanders when we held the line, and who have paid the supreme price —

*Major Campbell*

*Captain Scanlon*

*Major Hopkins*

*Private Skerry*

*Private Shields*

*Private Hood*

*Private Small*

*Private (Runner) Jocelyn*

*Private Ruth*

*Private Wellbelove*

*Captain Meikle*

*Captain Curry*

*Major Tanaille*

*Captain McGee*

*Lieutenant Mundell*



## Prefatory Remark

When war's alarm sounded in Canada, like many thousands of young men, the spirit of adventure was strong within me and here was an opportunity, as I thought, to kill two birds with the same stone—gratify my love of adventure and serve the Empire at one and the same time.

I have endeavored to give an exact picture of my surroundings, with its accompanying feelings and sensations, from the time I stepped into the ranks until I got my final Blighty, and if my word picture will have the effect of making any man get into khaki, I will be more than repaid, because the cause of the world's liberty demands the active cooperation of every able-bodied man who can get into the game.

There may be a protest in the minds of some against the swearing habit of the soldier. I firmly believe that if he were deprived of the

power to express himself profanely when occasion seemed to warrant, his efficiency would be materially hampered. And, therefore, I have no apology to make. Even the chaplains have been known to swear quite violently at times.

Since beginning the work of putting my data into book form, the United States has accepted the gauntlet of battle thrown down to her by German militarism, and the prospect of American lads and British Tommies fighting shoulder to shoulder in the cause of democracy and the world's freedom has inspired me with a new hope and faith in the outcome, and I am resting content in the unshakable belief that when the might of the Greatest Republic gets into action, the murderous tiger of German autocracy, with its fangs dripping blood from the lives of countless innocent victims, will in short order receive its final death thrust.

*Chicago, January, 1918*

H. B.



## Introductory

While adventure of every kind and character abounds on all sides in the trenches, in billets and in the rear of the front line, yet the grim seriousness of the business soon possesses a man with but a single idea in life, especially when in the vicinity of No Man's Land—to get the Hun and get him as quickly as he can.

In these pages I have but lightly touched on the awfulness in the sections of country over-run by the human devils. I have two reasons for so doing: First, because I do not believe it lies in the power of human ken to adequately describe the inferno created by the Hun, and, secondly, if I were to devote my lines solely to that phase of my life while in active service, every page should be deeply edged in black, because—"I could a tale unfold, whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul."

Such is not my purpose. I am blest by nature with the most intense optimism and this spirit has never deserted me but once; and I think under the same strain it would have taken leave of any man; and since I returned from the front I am more than ever determined that for the balance of my time on earth I shall endeavor to radiate optimism whenever and wherever I can. I think I will live the longer for so doing, and maybe those who come within the zone of my voice and my pen may also be the better for the dissemination of my love in the joy of living.

Therefore, the purpose I have undertaken has been to faithfully relate my experiences, and those of my chums, from the point of view of one who looks at the brighter side of life while undergoing the most severe test of grit and endurance that ever tried mortal men.

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# Holding the Line

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## CHAPTER I

### ANSWERING THE CALL

ONE sunny day in the early part of August, 1914, a little man with a bronzed face and a dingy set of overalls walked into the armories in Saskatoon, the wonder city of Saskatchewan. He was the author of this tale.

“Hello, Shorty, what brings you here? Hey, fellows, here’s our mascot.” This was the greeting I got from one of the recruiting sergeants.

I had come straight from the harvest field, a journey of eighty miles on horseback and train, without a coat, with well ventilated overalls, equally well-worn shoes and an unshaven chin, and my spirits sank perceptibly as I realized the contrast between my shabby five-feet-four and the classy-looking recruits gathered in the armories.

However, like the rest of the Englishmen in Canada who had answered the call I was determined, if it was humanly possible, to go overseas with the first contingent of twenty thousand men, and I duly presented myself for enlistment. My attestation was taken and I was sent to the doctor, being duly warned that I would have to pass the final test at Valcartier, Canada's first great war camp.

When I entered the examining room my spirits took another drop as I saw the magnificent bunch of tall, stalwart fellows who were awaiting their turn. I felt like a pigmy and almost turned tail then and there. "Now or never," I thought, as I stepped up to the doctor.

"What do you want, Bub?"

"To enlist, sir."

"Forget it," he said, "you are too short."

I lacked just two inches of the required height. He gave me the once-over and was a little taken aback when he found my weight was one hundred and forty pounds.

I also thought I would clinch my case by telling



him, without winking an eye, that I had served with the First Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment in England for four years, which was a battalion of the regular army, and that as they had thought sufficiently well of my stature to sign me up, a Canadian volunteer battalion could not in reason be any more particular than one of the Imperial Army. The falsehood is on record there today in my attestation papers and I'm not in the least ashamed of it.

"Well," said he, "you are as fit as any man, but they are sticklers about the height. I'll tell you what I'll do, you may leave with the boys for Valcartier and that will bring you two thousand miles nearer England. As you are determined to go anyway, part of your trip will be at the government's expense.

I felt as if I had grown two inches when he said this. I got into the ranks at once and commenced drilling with the rest of the boys until we left for Valcartier.

It was a nasty wet night when we left Saskatoon, but a record crowd turned out to see that

wild band start for the Great Adventure. Few of us had relatives there; the majority of us were Britishers who had left the Old Country to try our luck in the new land; but many were veterans of other wars who wanted to get into the game again, some had encircled the world in their wanderings, homesteaders, railway men, clerks—every walk of life was represented.

Ardent patriotism for the Old Flag and all that it stood for was the prompting motive of the rush to get into the First Canadian Division, but there was also the spirit of adventure strong within every man.

The mayor and city council and other government officials were present to bid us the soldier's farewell, "Good-bye, Good Luck, and Godspeed," and the train pulled out amid such a roar of cheering that the "Girl I Left Behind Me" was fairly drowned in the waves of departing cheers.

## CHAPTER II

### EN ROUTE TO VALCARTIER

FROM the time we left Saskatoon until we got into the great camp, I dare say there wasn't a man of us who gave a second's thought to the idea that within six months' time we would have had such a share in the defense of the world's liberties as would make the name of Canada a household word wherever the English language is spoken, and cause a thrill of justifiable pride to run through the blood of every Canadian, aye, and every Britisher, because every Britisher takes almost as much pride in the feats performed by men from another part of the Empire as he does in the deeds of the men from his own particular corner.

We were not long on the train before we began to get acquainted with each other and friendships were quickly formed that were soon to be tested

and tried in the fiercest flame that ever burned, and with no exception did they fail to ring true.

And right here and now I want to say, from a full heart, that the greatest privilege ever accorded an ordinary mortal like myself was that of serving with that devil-may-care crowd of lads who sang and chaffed and swore their way from exile in western Canada to their graves in France and Flanders.

The trip to Valcartier was uneventful except for the loss of a breakfast one morning that was sorely needed. Five or six of the recruit waiters had just entered our car from the supply-car, carrying trays with our ham and eggs, and our mouths were watering as we watched them coming, when a sudden lurch of the train sent the end waiter bumping into the man next him, and he followed suit to the man next him, and so on down the line, and in the effort to keep the trays and themselves from falling, the contents of every blooming tray was spilled on the floor, the seats, and the heads of the hungry recruits.

Our comments would not pass censor. Suffice

it to say, if cursing could put the Canadian Pacific Railway out of business that organization would long since have been defunct. We had to go hungry until noon as there was no time to get another meal prepared.

Another incident happened on that trip that concerned me most. We had stopped for a short visit at an Ontario town and our officers decided to give the people a sample of our military bearing, so we were marched through the streets. I think we managed to keep step for fully five minutes at a time. A kind-hearted old creature clapped her eyes on the "child," as she expressed it, marching alongside of his overgrown brothers, and she began to wail and point me out to everyone around there as far as her voice could carry, and to make matters worse we were halted with poor little me standing right opposite her.

"That poor child should not be allowed to go until he has at least stopped growing," was the burden of her plaint, and I was so incensed I honestly felt I could kill her with my bare hands and revel in the gore, because every fellow in the ranks

was giving me the snicker, and some of the unfeeling brutes were egging the old lady on. I tried to pay no attention—Lord, how I did want to inform her I was twenty-four years old and had been separated from my mother for six years. It took me a long time to live down the chaffing I got, due to the solicitous wails of that dear old female.

However, sober reflection tells me that she was not so much to blame, because I surely must have been a sorry figure in my five-feet-four and dressed as I was the day I left the harvest field, so I have since credited the outburst to her motherly instinct.

After we had entrained again I was seated beside Morgan, a chum with whom I had become very intimate, who was possessed of what might be called a second sight, a gift of foreseeing things, and he then told me of a number of things that would happen to me, every one of which has turned out exactly as he foretold it. For instance, he said the doctor would pass me at Valcartier; and later in Flanders, he told me when I was

going to be wounded. He also predicted his own wound. Morgan's devotion to me all through our campaigning was positively remarkable, and, as this story will show, I have never had cause to regret the chance that brought us together.

We finally arrived in Valcartier, detrained in the broiling sun, and trudged from the depot to our new canvas homes at the foot of the Laurentian Hills, which formed a wonderful background, with the Jaques Cartier River on our front, soon to become the swimming bath of twenty to forty thousand men.

## CHAPTER III

### CANADA'S WAR CAMP

**W**HEN we reached Valcartier no one in his wildest dreams would ever have associated us with soldiers, as a more motley-looking crowd would be hard to find. Here trudges a squat Scotchman, his freckled face a stream of perspiration, cursing the heat with a Doric accent you could cut with a shovel; next to him marches Big Bill Skerry, a tall Nova Scotian, as straight as the pine trees of his native province. Dear old Bill! he lies in the death trap at Ypres, dying as he had lived, afraid of nothing in human form, witty and dry of speech, quickest in repartee, and proud of his Irish-Canadian ancestry. And for all his profane mouth and caustic tongue, he was one of the best and bravest comrades a man could find with whom to share the trials and pleasures of active service.

Marching with his usual air of detached bore-



dom is Captain Innis Hopkins, the most ridiculed and, later, the best loved officer of all the gallant men who cursed us and nursed us and finally led us into France, as fine a bunch of men as ever stepped from a deck of a transport.

At my immediate right proudly marched a handsome, rosy-cheeked boy, with a complexion a lady might have envied; tall, lithe, with the promise of a fine manhood, and with the frank blue eyes of him shining with good-natured deviltry, he was already winning the hearts of his future comrades. By his side tramped a squat, slightly bow-legged man, of swarthy skin and jet-black hair, streaked with gray, surmounted by a stubble of black beard. The contrast between those two was startling, and yet a friendship sprang up between them that no ordinary civilian ever will understand, a friendship cemented by sharing danger and suffering, sinking every selfish consideration for the well-being of the other.

This will give some slight idea of the boys I soldiered with and who were to be my chums. But of all these, Morgan was closest to me. By

that mysterious attraction which draws men to one another we became chums and yet no two men could be more unlike in temperament; he was reserved almost to the point of rudeness, while I have always been ready—perhaps too much so for my own good—to make friends at once. When we got into the game, through the medium of that peculiar characteristic I have already mentioned, he sensed, like the steer nearing the shambles, any disaster or trouble ahead, and at those times he would overwhelm me with demonstrations of affection, and afterwards, apparently ashamed of his outburst, he would find some pretext to pick a quarrel with me, and curse me with a fluency and picturesqueness only acquired by long and careful practice. Many times we got to blows. But we loved each other and still do, and his love for me was thoroughly evidenced later on.

## CHAPTER IV

### SOLDIERS IN THE MAKING

THE first thing we did after our arrival was to go to the doctor for final examination. Again my heart dropped when I saw what seemed to be a physically splendid man rejected, and I felt that my case was hopeless. I stripped, and, with my heart pounding like a trip-hammer, presented myself. I was reassured almost instantly by his kindly manner. He gave me a most rigid looking over and pronounced me fit, but shook his head dubiously at my height. An inspiration seized me: "Doctor, I may be small, but it is concentrated stuff."

He laughed and told me to dress. Trembling with delight and relief I fell into line to take my first "shot in the arm," as we called our inoculation against typhoid, and when the surgeon jabbed me with the needle I promptly fainted for the first time in my life.

Life now began in earnest; day succeeded day of hard training. The weather was ideal, our only trouble being the dust-clouds raised from the sandy ground by marching troops.

Uniforms were issued, and in two weeks' time one would not have recognized us. Many laughable incidents occurred in connection with our uniforms; nearly every man got something that was too big or too small. The quartermaster gave me a hat that was two or three sizes too large. I asked him what I should do and he told me to come back in the morning, which I did.

"You told me to come back and see you, sir, about my cap; it is too big."

"Well, I can tell by your bothering nerve that you've got the swelled head and it won't be long before it fits you. Get to blazes out of here."

I did not think it prudent to pursue the matter further. I was wondering what I would do with the cap when I espied a fellow with a head like a bull and a cap resting just on the crown. "Here's my chance," thought I, and I was after him in a jiffy. He was a Scot.

“Matey, how would you like to swop caps?”

“Wha’s the matter wi’ yours?”

“Mine’s too large.” He took mine and examined it critically, feeling the quality and the texture.

“It’s no as gude as mine; I wudna swop.”

“Why, yours doesn’t fit you and mine would.”

“Ay, but the quality, lad, look at the quality o’ mine.”

“It’s just exactly the same as mine.”

“Naething o’ the kind,” he said, “the quartermaster is a particular friend o’ mine and he gie me one especially.”

“He did, like ducks.”

“O vera weel. Besides, I dinna mind a little thing like that; it’s the quality. But I’ll tell you what I’ll do,” he said, “if you want the cap an’ will gie me an extra shillin’ on account o’ the quality, I’ll maybe let ye hae it.”

I spent no further time arguing with him; I realized at once he was the original one hundred per cent efficiency man who bought something from a Jew and sold it to another Jew at a profit.

I gave him the quarter. He took it, but before giving me his cap, he took mine, tried it on carefully (they were identical in every particular except the size), then handed me his, gave me a wink and walked off. I felt I had really gotten my twenty-five cents' worth.

The happiest people in Valcartier that time were the tailors; they reaped a harvest from our repairs and alterations. An old political campaigner in the battalion suggested that the tailors should get busy with the administration and arrange to throw their support to the government if the chief of staff would agree to retain the services of the quartermasters who were such marvelously strange guessers at the size of the average man. We laughed ourselves to sleep that night.

The growth of Valcartier during our stay was like a chapter in Aladdin. Like mushrooms in the night there sprang up stores, houses and amusement places of every description, and they did a thriving business, because the men rapidly acquired the spending habits of the soldier.

An attempt by one of the moving-picture pro-

prietors to extort money from the soldiers turned out rather badly for him. He advertised the same picture for a number of nights under a different title each night, and a hard-headed Scotch soldier, upon inquiring if it were not the same film they had seen the previous night, was told to go to hell.

"I'm running this show," said the proprietor.

"Weel, ye'll no be runnin' it long, I'm thinkin'," said Jock. "Hey, lad," he yelled to me as I happened along, "run like the deil to Company B, Third Battalion, over yonder, and tell them Red Stuart wants to clean up a crook over here. Hurry, noo."

I shot across in the direction indicated and found a bunch of Highlanders sprawled on the ground, smoking their pipes. I delivered the message and in a twinkling fully fifty brawny sons of the heather sprang from the ground and were dashing toward Red Stuart. I ran after them and awaited developments a short distance off. Red quickly told them what had happened and their Scotch sense of justice wronged was thoroughly aroused.

“Wha’ll ye be wantin’ us tae do, Red?”

“MacDonald, take thirty men to the rear and up-end the damned show; I’ll take care o’ the front.”

MacDonald and his thirty men circled to the back of the house and inside of a minute it commenced to quiver and slant forward. The soldier-patrons came tumbling out in a hurry, some of them head foremost, and soon were admiring spectators when they learned the cause of the trouble. The other Scotties, under Red Stuart, were lined up in front to catch the theater when it came down. Just then the proprietor came tumbling out.

“Who in hell’s doing this?” he demanded of Red. Red’s answer was a blow on the jaw that put him to sleep. Then the money from the till came rolling out over the floor and Red yelled.

“Quick, Sandy and Alec, pick it up an’ we’ll divide it after.”

Sandy and Alec let go of the building and gathered up the money in their caps, and Red shouted.



“All together, lads, let her go.”

The men at the back gave a heave, the men in front let go, and down crashed the frail building, splitting in two. A streak of flame shot up from the middle and soon a bright blaze lit up the scene, and by its light the Sons of St. Andrew religiously divided the spoils of war.

But the trouble did not end here. A fire-call was turned in by the nearest bugler, was caught up by each successive bugler in turn, and in two minutes the entire camp was in a turmoil. The men fell into line, yelling like wild Indians; it was pandemonium let loose. The roar of noise traveled clear down to the end of the lines, where it reached the artillery, the horses stampeded, made a mad rush for the river, and forty valuable animals were drowned.

## CHAPTER V

### CROSSING THE ATLANTIC

OUR military exercises had built every man of us up to such a degree of physical perfection that we felt fit for any test of endurance, and the absence of worry, the companionship of so many fine chums, the good wholesome food and invigorating air had worked wonders in us. We were no longer the awkward squad that had slouched off the train into Valcartier.

Our officers told us we were a disgrace to the service, but swiftly the change was taking place. We could walk our ten or fifteen miles in regulation time, and the standard of our shooting was exceptionally high.

At first only twenty thousand men were to go, but as seventy-five thousand had responded to the call and the eagerness of the boys to go had caused them to redouble their efforts to become efficient,

the first expeditionary force was increased to thirty-three thousand men.

Toward the end of September we were inspected for the last time by his Royal Highness, the Duke of Connaught, and in the afternoon we were ordered to get our kits packed and stuff ready, as we were leaving for England. Excitement ran high and every man was in his place next morning at ten o'clock. It was a rainy Sunday morning, but that did not dampen our spirits.

"Battalions will move off by the right of companies, No. 1 leading," came the order; the senior officer commanding shouted, "Company, tshun; form fours; right; left wheel; quick march." We were off for England.

After traveling the eighteen miles from camp to Quebec we boarded the big steamer that was to bear us to England. My battalion was assigned to the *Lapland*, the largest of the fleet transports. In her hold thousands of sacks of flour were stacked, part of Canada's gift to the motherland immediately on the outbreak of the war. Some of us did not appreciate the gift as we might, be-

cause it was part of our duty to load it from the dock to the hold.

I had a pardonable thrill of pride as I stood on the dock and watched our fellows file aboard and I could not help asking myself—"Could these bronzed, cleanly-built, athletic men be the same who tramped wearily into camp one short month ago?" Such was the result of our officers' untiring work and the patient efforts of the regular sergeants who first took us in hand, and last, but not least, the keenness of the men themselves to become efficient and disciplined soldiers.

The whole fleet sailed from Quebec to Gaspé Bay, where we were picked up by our convoy. The arrival of the battleships and cruisers was greeted with rousing cheers, which were answered in kind by the men of the fighting ships. It was the most impressive sight I have ever witnessed; up to that time nothing had so majestically expressed the sentiment of the Overseas Dominions hastening to the help of the mother country.

By this time the seriousness of the conflict began to dawn upon the country. The magnificent

exploits of French's glorious little force had fired every one of us, and every time the band played "Tipperary," the wildest enthusiasm prevailed.

It was on one of the first nights aboard that the first shadow of the war fell upon me. A sort of gloomy mist rose before my eyes and clouded my brain, and I felt morally certain that something had happened to Tom, my twin brother, and sorrowfully I have to tell that he died in the battle of the Marne. I did not learn the particulars until I reached England. He died as he would have wished to die, fighting gloriously for the Empire.

Very few of the battalions had bands with them, but the Sixth of Winnipeg, that embarked with us, had a splendid band, and they were most generous in supplying us with musical treats all the way across.

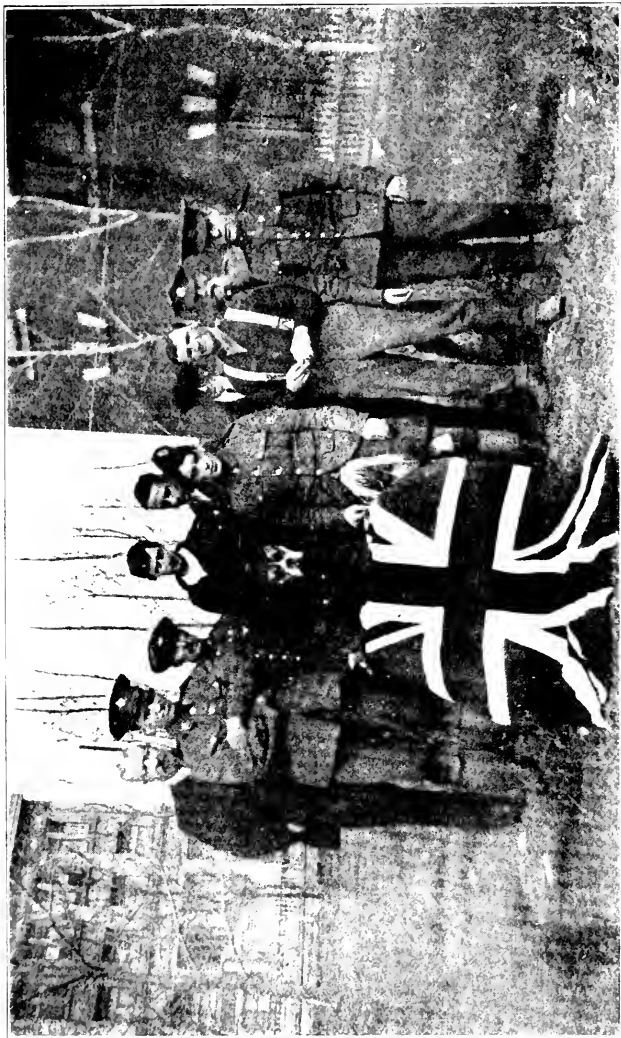
I shall never forget the scene at these concerts, especially at night—the moon shining on the sea, calm almost as a lake, the men lounging in various attitudes of ease, some leaning over the taffrail, others in chairs, and all smoking and enjoying the strains to their hearts' content.

The only disagreeable feature of the voyage was the deadly regularity with which we were fed upon stew; our feelings in this regard were put into rhyme by one of the grim humorists of the battalion:

Our daily bread is stew,  
That's all the cook can brew,  
For kind heaven's sake, please give us some cake  
Or anything else that's new.

One night at dinner, when the waiter handed him his stew, he stood up, and, calling for silence, announced that he had a few remarks to offer for the benefit of the misguided souls who entertained the notion that we were not properly fed. There was an angry clatter of knives on the plates of the stew, as the men were fighting mad with the monotony of the grub, but finally the speaker got a semblance of order and he commenced:

“Soldiers of the King, I believe it is duly right and fair to the cook and the commissariat that the idea which has seemed to be finding lodgment in the minds of some of us that we are not properly looked after, as far as our stomachs are concerned,



The Bull-dog behind the flag has licked all comers in Western Canada. The men are Canadian veterans, who, with bull-dog persistency, "held the line" in Flanders. Author on extreme right





should be banished at once, and I feel sure it will be when I point out to you in a few words how erroneous that thought is.

“Have you ever considered what a load of anxiety is lifted from our minds as to what we are going to have for breakfast, for dinner, for supper? Have you ever thought about that?”

“You’re damned right, we have,” from fifty throats at once.

“Be patient, please, for just a moment. Have you ever thought that we are saved absolutely every petty worry as to whether the roast beef will be tough, the chops old and unpalatable, the fish mushy, or the pudding not properly seasoned? Not a particle of troublesome speculation about any of these things.”

“For God’s sake, let them trouble us all they want,” from the audience. He continued:

“We take our places at the table calm and serene in the perfect confidence that there is not the least doubt as to what we are going to eat, and filled full of adoration in the sacredness of our food, for do we not know that it is like unto

the holiest man that ever trod this old earth of ours — the same, yesterday, today and forever.”

A roar of approval greeted the speech and the somewhat blasphemous reference, but from that time on we took the humorous view of the situation, thereby saving ourselves a lot of misery.

One night at dinner, when our usual stew-portion was served, one of the fellows left the table for a few minutes, and while he was gone we switched his soup, substituting water, and hastily, but thoroughly, scraped every scrap of meat off the bone. He came back, tasted of his soup, then poured it over the table. He picked up his soup bone, looked for the meat, and sent the bone flying down the cabin. Unluckily it struck an officer and he was promptly bundled into the clink (guardhouse). He was an Irishman, and on his trial the following morning he made a thoroughly characteristic defense.

“Sor, to tell yez the thruth, I just happened to think av the athrocities av them damned Germans on the helpless wimen and childher, an’ I thought how would I feel if those near an’ dear

to me were threated in that way, an' on the impulse av the moment, without thinkin', or lookin', I flung the bone, imaginin' I was right in the middle av the fightin'."

It didn't save him, but it cut off some days from his stay in the clink.

On more than one occasion our thirst for revenge on the stew was gratified by seeing it heaved all over the floor by a sudden roll of the boat in rough weather.

Our chief form of entertainment while aboard ship, in addition to the band concerts, was the vaudeville shows that were given. Among our cosmopolitan crowd much fine talent was discovered—songs, readings, exhibitions of juggling, boxing competitions, etc.—served to while away the monotony of the voyage and make life livable during the crossing.

Church services were held regularly every Sunday; the two denominations represented were Church of England (Episcopal) and Roman Catholic. Mass was held at eight-thirty and the Protestant minister commenced his service at ten-

thirty, at which were assembled all the balance of the battalion. Although my attendance was compulsory, these services were deeply impressive and will remain in my memory as long as I live. The majestic ship ploughing through the water and the swish of the spray mingling with the men's voices as we sang the hymns we learned in childhood made a lasting impression on all of us, and I am sure that the emotion of those moments has stayed with every man throughout our campaign in France and since.

## CHAPTER VI

### LAND AHOY

ON a beautiful evening in the fall, after a voyage of twenty-two days on the water, the transports quietly stole, one by one, into the harbor of Plymouth. None of the townspeople had the remotest idea that the Colonials were anywhere near England, and it was not until the *Strathcona Horse* displayed a huge pennant from the ship, which was anchored close to the quay, that our identity was disclosed. It took them but a couple of seconds to grasp the fact that the Canadians had arrived in England, and in less than half an hour the harbor was alive with every conceivable kind of craft, loaded near to the sinking point with cheering humanity.

I wish I could describe my sensations as I once again looked upon the green fields of my native land. To find out how much one loves his home he must leave it, and after my voluntary exile of

six or seven years, I wanted to shout and sing for very joy.

We English may be dense, thick-headed, slow to act, and guilty of several other things charged to us, but I doubt if any nation could love its country with more intensity than true Englishmen.

Steering close to our boat the crowd asked us if we needed anything. We replied that we needed *everything*, and we got it; cigarettes, tobacco, food, candy—in fact, everything that could comfort a soldier's heart, was thrown on our decks.

I gazed at the shores of my native land, listening to the strains of "O Canada," played by the band and echoed back by the glorious hills of Devon, and the thrill within me was indescribable. There was also an undercurrent of wonderful feeling that made me proud, not only that I was a Britisher, but that our grim old mother-nation was nursing there in one of her great harbors the robust manhood of a virile daughter-nation that had heard the call and answered and that I was a part, however small, of that answer.

Songs of the British nations would go floating out to sea and inland to the hills. Following the strains of "Annie Laurie" would come "Men of Harlech," "The British Grenadiers," "Dear Little Shamrock," and then the incomparable lilt of "Tipperary."

We finally received the order to disembark. Now it is an unwritten law in the army, in the practice of that most soldierly art of thieving, that a man must thief from every battalion and company except his own, and we thought we might just as well start on anything lying around loose on the *Lapland*. The Colonel may have wondered why we came to the "Present arms" with such alacrity when we said farewell to that splendid ship that brought us over; but the truth of it was we wanted to get away from the scene of our activities before any uncomfortable questions could be asked.

After a thoroughly profane and good-natured farewell with the burly British sailors and a rousing welcome from the people, we marched out in force to be delivered into the hands of the citizens.

And such a welcome! It beggars description. I never had my hand shaken so much and I never was kissed so much in all my life.

One middle-aged lady, with two beautiful daughters, exclaimed, "You brave boy, I am going to kiss you for your mother's sake." "I will too," said her daughters, and I was kissed by the entire family. I couldn't help venturing, "How about a kiss for my own sake?" And I glanced at the daughters. "Surely," said the mother, and she kissed me again, but the girls were a little bit abashed and did not respond to my suggestion, much to my disappointment.

At one spot in our welcome I was again the subject of an outburst of damnable sympathy from a motherly-hearted woman who almost went into hysterics at the idea of such a child as I going out to help stem the on-rushing Huns. However, my comrades were filled full of the attentions they were receiving from their male and female admirers and my predicament passed unnoticed this time, for which I fervently thanked God.

In the course of our parade we were taken in



front of Drake's monument and I could not help wondering what he would have thought, had he been there in the flesh, at the sight of those hardy adventurers. Surely he would have felt that here indeed were men after his own heart, ready and willing to dare everything, to go anywhere for the sake of the motherland and their own new land across the seas.

By sheer strength we reached the depot at last and entrained for Salisbury Plain.

## CHAPTER VII

### SALISBURY PLAIN

**M**IDNIGHT, and as dark as pitch found us shivering and blinking sleepily on the platform of a small railway station on the outskirts of Salisbury Plain. From here a truly murderous hike blistered our feet, spoiled our tempers and proved to us in no uncertain manner how stale we had become during our journey overseas. Just as day dawned we floundered wearily to a place where tents flapped sadly against tent poles as if sympathizing with our woeful plight. These tents had simply been erected and loosely staked out and were left for us to tighten and make habitable. We were too weary to bother with them; we simply dropped on the ground and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

When we awoke we found ourselves drenched to the skin, our tents still half erected, the com-

missariat all disorganized and the plain hidden in solid sheets of driving rain. This was just a prelude of the terrible days to come.

In a day or two we had shaken down, with seven men to each tent, and our training began. A brief spell of fine weather followed, with a visit from the late Lord Roberts to inspect us. This visit of our great Little General left me feeling very comfortable, as he was fully an inch shorter than myself, and it seemed to me very wonderful that that slight, courteous old man should be the hero of so many exploits in India, Afghanistan, South Africa, and other parts of the world. It will be remembered of him forever that a few years before he had given Great Britain a solemn warning of the intentions of Germany. With few exceptions the newspapers, the *London Times* included, had branded him a scare-monger and jingo. Alas, how bitterly true was the great little man's prophecy!

He died a brief month afterwards, just as he would have wished, "in harness," and among his Indian comrades he loved so well.

Then the rains descended, the floods came, and the plain became one seething quagmire of mud. Words are powerless to describe our continual conflict with that mud; it was everywhere—in our eyes, our hair, our tents, our clothes, our grub; we often had to swallow it as well as wallow in it. Again our poet-wit got his work in and this was our universal lament:

Mud, mud, damnable mud,  
In mud we must wallow and mud we must swallow,  
Mud, mud, damnable mud,  
Oh say will we ever get out of the mud.

Our tents leaked incessantly, but with all our discomfort we were healthy and happy and, in consequence, were grumbling all the time. We roundly cursed our officers, anathematized the mud, swore we would mutiny—all done sotto voce. But we were very, very happy.

And now, to crown my happiness, I obtained leave to visit my people in the Midlands, about one hundred and thirty miles from the place. The only way I could curb my impatience was by cleaning and re-cleaning my buttons, badges and boots,

and vainly endeavoring to read the newspaper. At last, I paraded before the Colonel and paymaster to receive my pass and money, and after satisfying the critical eye of my commander that I was clean enough to be a credit to the British Army, I was permitted to go.

I boarded a taxi and paid ten shillings for a three-mile ride to the railway station. Had the Shylock asked four times that amount I would have cheerfully given it to him.

Only a son who loves his father and mother can appreciate such a home coming as I got; I shall never forget it. Mother-like, the dear old lady was thoroughly dissatisfied because I hadn't the appetite of a dozen strong men. One of her remarks typified the English mother—the peer of any woman on God's earth today. I asked what she thought of my journey over to do my bit for the Empire and her reply was: "I knew you would come. I knew it. God bless you, my boy. I hate to think of where you are going, but I believe I would hate you more, my own son as you are, if you did not go."

Such a reply from a woman who had already given one son for the cause exemplifies the spirit of self-sacrifice which has so splendidly been evidenced by the women of the Allies today. These mothers deserve the V. C. as truly as any soldier.

My father's greeting was typical of the reserved Englishman. He looked up at me without a word and just at that moment my young sister walked in and stood beside him; the lassie was just as tall as I was short; and my father's first remark was, "If you had been as tall as this girl is, you might have called yourself a soldier." Such was the greeting after an absence of six years and thus does the Englishman cover up any signs of emotion.

The time was all too short to see everyone I wanted to see; my three days' leave passed like an hour; but practically all the friends and chums of my school days were either in France, on the sea, or in training. An athletic club to which I belonged before I left England for Canada had a total membership of two hundred, and of this number one hundred and eighty-eight were in

khaki, and even at that early date eight of them had paid the supreme price.

Promising to come back as soon as possible before I left for France I said good-bye and commenced my return journey, feeling very homesick and miserable. But I found a very interesting companion on the way back, one of the gallant boys of French's "Contemptibles." He was one of the few survivors of a battalion of Gloucesters and was one of the twenty-four who held back about seventy times their number and covered the retreat of the remnant of their regiment. When history is written and the deeds of the different regiments recorded, the wonderful stand of the twenty-four will go down as an epoch of the Great Retirement.

Reticent as most British soldiers are, yet being a comrade, he told me enough to give me some idea of what we were going into. Parting from him at Bristol, by a strange coincidence I ran into a corporal of the Second Battalion of Gloucesters. This man had just completed his service with the army and had been about a month on reserve when

again called out. He now lies somewhere in France, for within three weeks from this time his regiment was almost wiped out.

While sitting in the train I happened to put my head too far out of the car window and away went my cap. The corporal helped me out. He dug from his kit a cap of a wonderful checked pattern, big black and white squares, and gave it to me. It was staggering in its color scheme, but better than nothing. Next morning, judge of my consternation when I found it impossible to get a cap from the quartermaster in time to go on parade, and I was obliged to go in my beautiful new head-piece. It seemed to shout its color scheme from end to end of the battalion. Particularly did Morgan make caustic comment on the queer ideas of some people as to the proper head-dress for a soldier, and everyone, from the corporal up wanted to know what in hell I meant by coming on parade with that awful thing on my head.

Finally the Colonel came and ran his eye over his pets. "Tshun," he roared, and everyone "tshuned." A moment of silence while the Old



Man critically lamped his battalion; then it broke.

“Who is that man who thinks he may come on parade in his own ideas of fashion? Fall out, that man, I want to speak to him.”

I sneaked guiltily up to him, mentally noting those of my pals who snickered loudest, and stood dutifully at attention. After informing me that in spite of my looks I was supposed to be a soldier, and that although it was the dearest wish of his heart to permit me to disgrace the battalion, yet he felt compelled to administer a little correction.

“How came you to be wearing that monstrous thing?”

I explained truthfully, but he insisted that I had been imbibing and had lost my cap as a consequence. That afternoon, when tottering under the weight of sides of beef and other heavy things, which I was obliged to carry, I resolved that if I ever again lost my cap, I would not be guilty of wearing an alibi.

## CHAPTER VIII

### LIFE IN THE ENGLISH CAMP

**A**FTER my first trip home, for a few days I went about my work without interest, but when one is in superb physical condition, it is impossible to be depressed long, and soon I was grumbling away again as happy as ever. Still the wretched weather continued. If it did not rain, it snowed; if it did not do one or the other, it did both; if it did not do both, a fog you could take in your hand would hang over the place the whole day long. If the Fates decreed we should have a fine day, we were worked till our bones cried out for rest.

In the early morning we would curse the bugles as they blared out their warning for us to be up and doing. Sometimes the temptation grew too strong and one of us would be missing when we fell in shivering for our morning's physical tor-

ture. This is the name the Canadians had for physical drill. The tardy one would regret his indifference to "Reveille" before the day had well begun, for he would usually be told off for all fatigues, as well as turning out for the day's work with the battalion.

A vigorous trot would set our blood coursing through our veins, and after the torture had loosened up our muscles, we wondered why we had ever wanted to stay in bed at all.

Breakfast would follow, and after that we would fall in to be inspected by the officers, tongue-lashed by the Colonel, and finally marched off for instruction in tactics on the field, or other necessary parts of an infantry soldier's training. We might arrive back in time to partake of a noon-day meal, or it would perhaps be in the middle of the afternoon, or again we might stay out the whole twenty-four hours.

Night alarms would see us sleepily but frantically struggling to don our equipment so that we would make a record for our company by being first at the assembling post. The language on such

occasions was almost the acme of perfection, because our studies in the army in that regard had brought us to a truly wonderful state of efficiency in fluency and the ability to improvise suitable words for all occasions.

One may therefore imagine the atmosphere when a buckle of Morgan's equipment would fix itself firmly in some inaccessible part of mine and we would struggle to straighten out the tangle by the dim light of a candle. Usually it would end by one of us inadvertently putting out the candle. After this there would be absolute silence as even our vocabulary was not adequate to the situation. With clenched teeth we would relight the candle, if we were fortunate enough to find it; if not, we finished our dressing by touch, each mentally cursing the other for his clumsiness.

Finally we would stumble to the assembly post to receive a wiggling from the O. C. (officer commanding) of the company down. On our way back Morgan would tell me that in all his life he had never known one so blankety-blank a clumsy as I was, and I would consign him to everlasting

perdition, and the quarrel would wax hotter and hotter, to the great amusement of the other boys, until we arrived at the inevitable stage when the challenge to fight is given. Then the sergeant would step in, and we would be obliged to satisfy ourselves by mentally vowing to settle it once for all when we got back to camp. However, the excitement and fatigue would soon cool our tempers, and the usual sequel was for the two of us to be found foraging in some mutual enemy's camp, or we would settle down, cuddled in one another's arms, for a long refreshing sleep.

At the remount camp, situated about two miles from our own camp, were a number of unbroken horses; these were used as remounts for artillery, cavalry, transports, etc. Every day two or more companies from the battalion were told off as "Remount fatigue" and had to clean and groom the animals, and one day shortly after this, when it was part of my duty to assist in taking a load of provisions for the men who were looking after the horses, we came upon a wondrous object, lying resplendent in all its native beauty, by the side of

the road. Hardly believing our eyes, we bore down upon the stranger. It was real, and we rejoiced. Thirty-six gallons of good beer had wandered away from a jolting wagon. After several vain efforts, in which we nearly ruptured ourselves with straining, we finally succeeded in hoisting it on our transport. It was necessary to resort to "camouflage" to hide our treasure, but it was done. The day passed slowly, as we curried and brushed that kicking, squealing mass. We were tortured with fear lest any of the others should discover our find. As expert thieves we respected others of the craft, and in this case we feared them.

Night came, and to our relief, our cask had not been unearthed. That night figures might have been discerned in the gloom, stealthily making their way to a certain big marquee. Inside this marquee was stacked bales of hay and other feed for the transport animals.

By the dim light of two stable lanterns we paid our respects to the delightful stranger until we had exhausted its hospitality, and at "Lights

out" we tacked homewards, after an affectionate farewell to one another.

I will not attempt to excuse myself, or the others, but perhaps we may be forgiven when I tell you that on Salisbury Plain we endured the most frightful weather conditions. Add to this our isolation from anyone but soldiers, and the entire absence of amusement except what we manufactured ourselves, and some toleration may be vouchsafed us. If those boys let loose occasionally, they also blocked the road to Calais, and many forget this when criticizing the men, who not only faced hell in France and Flanders, but cheerfully fore-went almost all the advantages that later contingents enjoyed while in training.

On a soaking wet night a few of us tramped over the plains to our new homes and huts, which had been given us in substitution for the tents. For some reason hut life told on the health of the boys and that terrible scourge, cerebral spinal meningitis broke out, and soon many were infected. For myself, I never contracted anything but a trick of getting into trouble. Still the rain

descended and the mud deepened. It was in the hut that many of the peculiarities of our comrades helped to amuse us. Big Bill Skerry and young Fitzpatrick had struck up a close friendship with each other, although Bill was about double the age of Fitz. At intervals three solitary long hairs would appear amongst the down on Fitz's chin, then Bill would declare it was time Fitz had a shave, and he would seize his young friend, and a mighty struggle would ensue, but it usually ended by Bill clipping off the three sisters—Faith, Hope and Charity, as someone called them.

Another fellow, Bolous, whom we had with us, was the butt of much of our wicked horse-play. This strange being worked, ate and slept with an automatic colt attached to his belt. For the sake of soldier critics, I may say he kept it under cover on parade, but it never left him. Naturally we asked him when he expected to meet the guy who was looking for him. Many an attempt was made to steal that gun, but no matter how soundly he slept, the slightest movement or touch near him would bring him to a sitting position, with the



automatic on a dead line for the would-be thief's head. He had never been in England before, and we romanced to him so earnestly about the denizens of Whitechapel, that on his first visit to London, instead of just his one automatic, he evened up matters by wearing one on the other side, and stalked down Whitechapel, armed to the teeth.

This man was deeply interested in bayonet fighting, and would question our instructors until they loathed the sight of him. He studied the matter from all angles and would endeavor to get the man next to him to act the part of an attacking Hun in order to show us his own method of rendering Fritz *hors de combat*. Nobody ever volunteered as there is no knowing what he would have done in his eagerness to spit something with that bayonet. He devoured all that he could find in drill books about "Hun Sticking." He was particularly nerve trying at night, when we hobbled at cards or were reading before "Lights out." Everything would be quiet, except for the low murmur of conversation and an occasional heartfelt oath from a loser in the poker party. Then

suddenly we would almost jump out of our skins, as a figure hurled itself at the rifle rack, seized a rifle from the stand, fixed the bayonet and rushed up and down the hut furiously parrying and lunging at an imaginary foe. Oblivious of everything except dispatching the figurative German, he would rush here and there while we endeavored to avoid the flickering steel. The man was enormously strong, and agile as a cat, and all we could do was to dodge as well as we could until his paroxysm passed and he had settled down to work out some other scheme for Boche killing.

We swore we would murder him if he did not cease these imitations of a madman, but glad are we all who knew him that we took his wild behavior good naturedly, for a very short time afterwards he performed deeds of the most self-sacrificing kind under a wall of shell fire. Not a few men owe their lives today to his devotion to duty on that awful day at Ypres.

One night I was guilty of a betrayal of trust. I was detailed to watch some carloads of coal that stood in a siding. My trick (sentry-go) lasted

from four to eight in the morning. The rain was tumbling down as I floundered through the ooze to relieve the other sentry. After the sergeant of the guard had gone, I felt really miserable. There was only one place where I could stand with any degree of comfort and this was a sort of a step that stood up a few inches above the surrounding sea of mud, like a tiny rock in a swamp of brown colored soup. Balancing myself precariously on this forlorn hope, I thought I would pass the time by singing softly to myself. This seemed to bring the rain down with redoubled force so I stopped and took to cursing instead. Then the disaster came. I was gazing through the murk at nothing when a desire to stretch overtook me; I did so and the rifle overbalanced me. After several wild attempts to regain my balance, I floundered face down into the quagmire below. When I had partially digested the highly flavored mud, I addressed my surroundings with much feeling.

It was useless now to bother about trying to keep dry, as I was seeping wet through, so I stood and watched the liquid mass swirling around me

and the water flapping at my knees. I could see dimly by the light of a sputtering electric light at one corner of the car.

Slowly the time passed till I heard in the distance very faintly the bugles at headquarters sounding "Reveille." This is one of the most impressive things I have ever heard—the reveille at dawn and the last post at night. Away in the distance the first notes would steal faintly across the plain, each succeeding camp would take it up, until it reached us, then our own massed bugles would blare it out in one swelling din. From us it would pass to the next camp, until it died away as faintly as it had begun. Thus were fifty thousand men awakened from their slumbers, or hurried to them, during the winter of 1914.

Heaving a deep sigh of mingled appreciation of the music and disgust at my physical discomfort, I turned once more to studying the quagmire. Suddenly I was aroused by a gruff voice in a Cockney accent. It was a man of the big crowd of civilians, chiefly men unfit for the army, who worked at different occupations in and around the

camp. By the light I saw a little weazened-up man holding two coal scuttles.

“I say, mate, could I ’ave a couple of scuttles of coal?”

“No, you can’t,” I replied, “beat it.”

The little man stood his ground and I was glad of it, because here was someone to quarrel with, and I would gladly have quarreled with my own father at that moment after my night of shivering. However, there was to be no scrap. Just as I came within striking distance he opened his coat and displayed a flat bottle:

“Loike a drink, guv?”

I eyed the bottle for a second.

“How much is in it?” I asked.

“She’s full.”

Alas poor, frail humanity; my mind was made up in an instant. “You can take the bloomin’ car if you’ll give me the bottle.”

“Righto,” said he; “I only want a couple of scuttles-full, but yer can ’ave the bottle.”

My stomach was empty, my clothes were soaked, I was wet and chilled through and

through, but when my relief came I was supremely content with my lot. The sergeant sniffed suspiciously, but I held my tongue and bottle both.

A few nights following the above I experienced one of those unforgettable sensations that men have at one time or another in their lives. A very old and dear friend of mine, a veteran of a former campaign, had enlisted with the Princess Pats and the first opportunity I had I searched him out at the camp of the Pats. Returning home across the hills to our own camp I suddenly became aware of the roll of men's voices singing an old familiar hymn. The wind blowing in my direction carried the sound even above the swish of the rain; in fact, the solemnity of it all was intensified by the steady swish of the downpour. Every evening men by the thousands congregated in our only place of recreation, the huge Y. M. C. A. marquee, and on this evening they were singing that old favorite of all civilization, "Nearer, My God to Thee." It sounded like a mighty requiem.

## CHAPTER IX

### GETTING READY TO GO

**M**Y second leave arrived. Being issued with a new uniform, my buttons and badges burnished as bright as elbow grease and metal paste could make them, I flattered myself I made a most soldierly figure as I stepped out with the rest, en route for Amesbury station. The major, knowing his boys, gave us a word of warning. He held forth on the nearness of the time when we would be wanted to hold the thin line over the channel. The warning was a hint to be back on time or results unpleasant would follow. This did not prevent me taking an extra day or so.

This was to be the last I saw of my people before embarking on the final stage of the game and the time passed all too quickly. On the day of my final leave-taking not one shadow of sorrow was portrayed on mother's face. On the contrary,

she resorted to an old English custom that has been handed down for generations: after my last kiss and embrace she waved a cheery adieu and grabbing an old shoe that she had prepared for the moment she flung it after me with the time immemorial expression, "Good Luck and God-speed."

I held the tears back until I was well out of sight and then my pent-up feelings gave way and I let them freely flow. The memory of that farewell has supported me and given me strength to undergo what sometimes seems impossible when I look back over it all. My youngest sister, Edith, displayed the same bravery of spirit and maintained a brightness and a cheeriness which I well know she was far from feeling. Blessed indeed are we in our women and girls.

My return journey was in the company of another of the British-Canadians from my own village. At London we crammed ourselves into a carriage crowded with khaki-clad humanity, and a furious argument arose as to what constituted a real Canadian. Hot and hotter it grew until we





*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

#### THE REMAINS OF A ONCE PROSPEROUS VILLAGE

The frightfulness of modern warfare is shown in this remarkable picture. The bare sticks were once graceful trees; the heaps of debris, beautiful homes



steamed into the little depot, and it was only settled when a stalwart Canuck volunteered to knock hell out of any man in the whole damned army who said he wasn't a Canadian.

On arriving at the door of my former hut I found it barred and the boys inside told me to seek other quarters as the spinal meningitis had at last reached our abode. I entered the next hut and found it filled with my chums who had returned from leave, all feeling somewhat dismal, and we cast ourselves down wherever we could and dreamt about home till morning.

As before, my low spirits soon faded and I skipped about as usual. Now began a period of intensive training, chiefly bayonet practice. Musketry, route marching, bayonet fighting, and target practice all took up our time, and such games as football and baseball served to keep the men supple.

On New Year's eve we celebrated and the officers closed their eyes for awhile, and the men took full advantage of their temporary blindness. In our hut, story and song floated more or less

musically into the mist outside. The evening finished with a speech from one huge fellow, which he insisted on making in spite of our protest, and to emphasize his oratorical points, he seized the object nearest to him which happened to be me, and taking me by the coat collar and the leg, he drove home his points by thumping me, rear end downward, on the table. That was another time in my life when the way of the small man was hard, and the trouble of it was the table was harder.

Although I suffered somewhat by reason of my short stature, nature evened things up by giving me a stamina which nothing seemed to hurt. In consequence, I was always chosen to be one of the party who paraded before the doctor every few days in order to show the doctor that there was nothing very seriously wrong with our battalion, because the men were afraid we would be left behind when the contingent went to France owing to the amount of sickness in our bunch.

Policemen, whether civil or military, are ever the abomination of a liberty loving soldiery and

throughout the camp they were always on the lookout for offenders. However, on Salisbury Plain it was comparatively easy to avenge oneself on the M. P.'s. (military police). At night, after "Lights out" these officious guardians of the peace would be on the look-out for any of the boys who had stayed out too long, and who were dodging the sentries. On a stormy night, with their coat collars turned up to their ears and leaning against the storm, they would be walking on the chalk walks on each side of which stretched the sea of mud. The avenger usually prepared his attack by donning a pair of rubber boots, and stealing up behind the unsuspecting policeman until within a few feet of him, he would step off into the mud on the storm side of the M. P. and deliver a blow with all the pent-up feelings of an aggrieved soldier behind it and into the mud would topple the unlucky policeman. The Canadian idea of discipline had not yet become acclimated to the stern routine of the Imperial Army.

## CHAPTER X

### LEAVING FOR FRANCE

OUR work was harder now than ever; not a moment was lost in whipping us into shape for the Great Game and our nerves were becoming more tense each day. The final event before leaving was a review of the men in the presence of the King and Queen, Earl Kitchener, and other distinguished guests, as well as our kin-folk from all parts of Great Britain and Ireland and the Dominions beyond the seas.

Morning broke with the usual drizzle of rain, which happily stopped later on, giving us instead a very fine day. We filed out to the parade ground, a distance of about two miles. The Highlanders had arrived before us and a splendid sight they made. Standing at ease on the slope of a gently rising hill, their khaki aprons having been discarded for the occasion, they made a wonderful

splash of color on the dull landscape. Tall, lithe fellows for the most part, they looked the beau ideal of the British soldier. There seemed to be an air of dashing gallantry about them that was irresistible. Making the air hideous with their terrific skirling, the pipes droned and squealed their defiance of everything non-Scotch. The pipes were decorated with long colored streamers of the same pattern as the kilts and plaids of their owners. The pipers themselves were men of unusually fine physique, and surely Scotland and Canada would have felt proud to have seen the brave sight.

In spite of our dislike for the pipes there was an indescribable lilt to the music that seemed to get into our feet, and shoulders were thrown back and two thousand feet swung as one. In this fashion we arrived on the ground allotted to us for the parade. After the usual movement for placing troops in review order we stood in ranks in platoon formation, two by two, one behind the other.

The royal party not having arrived we stood at ease and had time to take in our surroundings.

As far as the eye could see, line after line of infantry stretched up the gently sloping hill. A massed band at our immediate rear did much to give one a curious feeling of elation. I shall never forget the sight. The huge Union Jack directly to our front surmounting the reviewing platform streamed grandly out in the breeze that was steadily blowing across the plain. A curious contrast between the dull drab of the ordinary infantry and the gay attire of the Highlanders struck me most forcibly. To our right the artillery in perfect formation seemed to stand like figures of adamant; there seemed something sinister and threatening in the dull color and lean appearance of the guns.

Immediately to their rear, reminding us of the wrath to come, stood the stretcher bearers of the medical service.

At last the puffing of a train was heard and we knew that our royal visitors had arrived. The King, Lord Kitchener, and other prominent soldiers and statesmen stepped off the train. The band crashed out the first bars of the national



anthem, a quick command to us, "Present arms," a movement, and all was still except for the rolling of the anthem across the plain, and then silence once more.

The King shook hands with the officers and the inspection began. This was the second time I had seen his majesty, but in spite of the fact that I am a loyal Britisher, I was much more interested in the martial figure by his side; this was the man who at that time held the defense of Britain's military forces in the hollow of his hand. I had read that Lord Kitchener was an inscrutable man, never known to smile; it was a fiction; he smiled genially at us all. But those keen, dark eyes did not miss one single detail of the men in front of him. My sensation as he passed in front of me was that he was looking straight through me into the man at my rear. No word of approval or otherwise did the renowned soldier utter, but I think he was pleased by the stalwart physique and the soldierly bearing of the boys. After they had duly inspected our ranks, they took their places on the saluting platform and the march past began, every

arm of the service being represented in its order. At the word, the artillery sprang into life and thundering down the slope at a mad gallop, they slowed gradually down and the horses walked, as proudly as horses ever did, past the saluting base.

Next the cavalry, the men with their swords at the carry, trotted by. A gallant sight they made with their Stetson hats and long yellow cloaks. The coats of horses perfectly groomed shone in the sun like satin and made a picture that was never surpassed by anything of the kind in the days when "Knighthood was in Flower."

Then came the first battalion of infantry and before I could notice more we, ourselves, had started to march past. The band struck up a martial air and four thousand feet, keeping perfect time, made the ground echo with their tread. My own battalion swung past the royal party with a lilt in its step that thrilled one through and through, and at the order "Eyes right" every head turned like clockwork. The old Fifth certainly made a gallant showing that day.

Immediately after the review, line after line of infantry arranged itself on each side of the track, and as the train bearing our distinguished visitors steamed through, a roar of cheering echoed and re-echoed away over the plain.

From then until our departure for the front each day's work was an unusually strenuous course of bayonet practice. Day after day we systematically stabbed and parried at sacks lying in trenches and hung up on poles till we saw nothing but bayonets in our waking hours and dreamt of nothing else in our sleep. One encouraging thing our instructors used to tell us when they would fluently express their disgust at our poor showing was, "Well, never mind, two-thirds of you will never get up far enough to use them blinkin' baynits."

One sunny afternoon in early February, we received the order to leave behind all surplus baggage and to burn all refuse and waste matter and leave the camp in perfectly sanitary condition. This done we paraded for miles in full marching order, loaded like mules. Hardened as we were

by our recent workouts, the strain was terrible, even when we were standing, while the Old Man inspected us.

At last the order to march was given and we knew that this time we were really going into the game. A grueling tramp of about an hour and we reached Amesbury. Again the rain was coming down and we were soaked as we stood waiting for the train.

At this point an unusual difficulty confronted the keeper of one of our soldiers, a recruit named Private Billy. Billy in his early days had jumped from crag to crag of the Rocky Mountains, had been brought down to Valcartier and, in spite of having very prominent veins in his legs, he passed the doctor, and he was the only one of our battalion who ever appeared on parade without being punished for not shaving. Billy had duly marched as was his wont in front of the battalion, when, to the consternation of the boys, the Colonel swore, as is the divine right of a colonel, that the goat must be left behind. Here was a real difficulty. We could not part with Billy; the boys argued

that we could easily get another colonel but it was too far to the Rocky Mountains to get another goat.

The difficulty was solved by buying a huge crate of oranges from an old woman who was doing a brisk trade with the boys. The oranges sold like hot cakes and in a jiffy the orange box was converted into a crate and Billy was shanghaied into the crate and smuggled on board the train. Poor Billy! for three days and nights he simply existed in that horrible crate on board train and on transport ship.

Billy, the goat, is still going strong and it is the boast of the Fifth that Kaiser Wilhelm has not yet "got their goat." Bill is a goat to be proud of. When the battalion was drawn up in review order and strictly at attention, no soldier ever stood more erect. He would stand with the transport, all four legs firmly braced on the ground, his head held high, without a flicker or a movement. His only weakness was a fondness for canteen beer that was unequaled by our most seasoned toper. Luckily for him, beer was hard to

get. The boys were so amused at his side-splitting antics when in his "cups" that they were forever treating him.

Billy, however, like most ne'er-do-wells, was a valiant soldier, and greatly distinguished himself at Ypres. In that immortal death struggle, Bill remained with his friends clear through. He was seriously wounded and I think the wound was in his back. The old fellow was tenderly nursed and eventually returned to duty with the rank of sergeant.

He was reduced to the ranks in a few days for when on duty near brigade headquarters he casually walked in and chewed up the nominal roll.

Promotion soon came his way again, and Bill, today, a veteran of a dozen mighty battles, worthily upholds the traditions of the Fifth, while his name is entered on the roll as Sergeant Bill.

The story of Billy, the goat, may be read in detail by anyone who cares to send for *Canada in Khaki*, a book published in England on the doings of Canadians in Flanders.

Our departure was typical of the grim times—

no band playing, no fond farewell, just a stealing away in the night. Our own relatives did not know we had arrived in France until they received their first letters from us.

We arrived in the early morning, still dark, at the seaport town of A—in the Bristol channel. Next day we steamed out, passing Land's End, still southwards, and in a curve up through the Bay of Biscay and dropped anchor in the bay of a certain port in Brittany. During this trip our attachment to the fiends that take refuge in the seams of a man's shirt was closer than ever. We slept where we could and passed the days huddled together on the lower deck of the old cattle barge, for she was nothing else. Mighty games of poker whiled away the time. The boys already imbued with the fatalistic spirit of the true British soldier, argued that fate was so uncertain that while they lived and had money, why not risk it, and the chief gamblers went the limit with all their worldly wealth.

## CHAPTER XI

### LANDING IN FRANCE

**T**HE battle song of the British Army, "Tipperary," which was made imperishable by the men who died at Mons and the Marne, was the first sound that rang in our ears as our ship drew up to the landing. It was a beautiful day, for spring had already begun to blossom in that part of the country, although when we hit the firing line it was still dead winter, and the scenery in France was disclosed to perfection that day.

The song was being sung by French children in excellent English who congregated in hundreds on the quay to see the Canadian soldiers disembark, and I don't think a finer set of boys ever set foot in France than Canada's first contingent.

Little did we think that in two short months more than half of us would be dead, dying and shot to pieces.



A storm of cheering rent the air as our ship was moored to the dock. Oranges, bananas, grapes and fruit of every description were thrown to us, to which we replied by sending over buttons, badges, etc., these "Souvenirs Canadian" being literally fought for by the crowd.

One stalwart Frenchman earned our undying gratitude by catching our company commander squarely on the side of the face with a nice plump orange. It landed with a lovely stinging smack and spread itself most luxuriantly over his capacious mug. Those who had been recipients of the numerous punishments dealt out for our misdeeds chuckled quietly and nudged each other in unholy glee.

We were no sooner safely docked than—to work. Winches groaned as if in protest, as they hauled guns, ammunition and other impedimenta of a division on active service. Fatigue parties sweated and cursed as they stumbled backwards and forwards on and off the ship. Every man had his work to do, and long before daylight everything was ready for our departure north.

At five o'clock in the morning we were issued goatskin coats, mittens and gloves, and inspected by the O. C. The order came to march, and in heavy marching order, we trudged to the depot. This marching order consists of rifle and bayonet attached to braces, which in turn are attached by self-locking buckles to the belt, the knapsack or valise which usually contains a shaving kit, towel, soap, change of underwear, socks, one pair of boots, mess tin, and any other little convenience you may wish to carry. Later on we learned by bitter experience to dispense with everything except absolute necessities.

The aforesaid goatskin coats were a gift from the then Czar of Russia and were supposed to have come from China. When we had donned our gift coats there was a perceptible murmur of comment running from end to end of the ranks, caused by the odor from the presents of the Czar not unlike the presence of a skunk. Examination disclosed that the bloody (literally) coats were dotted in many places with the actual flesh of the deceased animals still sticking to them. In spite

of stern orders from the O. C's. of the various companies to maintain silence during inspection, it was plainly discernible that the smell had penetrated even the seasoned nostrils of the officers themselves, from the Colonel down. I am certain that the Germans would have been badly frightened that we had a poison gas of our own if we had had a chance to tackle them with our coats on when the stink was fresh and full in its pristine glory, as it was when we first got them.

As fate would have it, and as usual, I got a garment that would have covered the hairy legs of Goliath of Gath; I almost tramped on the hairy fringe every time I stepped, and I can't think of anything that would more aptly describe my appearance than my chum Morgan's exclamation: "For God's sake, fellows, take a look at this little runt of a centipede. Shorty, for the love of Mike have you any idea what you look like?"

"Go to hell," I snorted, whereat the entire platoon held their sides, and I was mad enough to turn a machine gun on them.

Hanging from the belt is the entrenching tool

and handle; it is shaped like a tiny grub hoe. One would be apt to be amused at the idea of digging a hole with a toy like that, but under shell fire you could dig a hole quicker with that little tool than with a pick and shovel.

Next is the haversack worn on the left side and the water bottle on the right. In the pouches attached to the belt and braces a hundred and twenty rounds of ball ammunition are carried. In addition to all this a man takes his blanket and oil sheet rolled on the top of his valise.

One can understand from this why men for the army need so much training. Men of the finest physique would collapse inside of a mile with marching order on their backs if not properly trained.

We arrived at the depot where we were told to lie down if we wished and we did so with alacrity and waited for the train. Day broke, and once more fatigue work. Guns were loaded on flat cars and transport wagons, horses were placed in box cars, eight to a car, hay, straw, rations, etc., were loaded in double quick time, and finally the

men were off, so many to a car. On the side of the cars in white letters was painted the legend *Chevaux 8, Hommes 40*, which to those who do not know French means eight horses or forty men.

Forty-three were told off to our car and here the first taste of active service really began. We were three days on board that train, but not only could we not lie down, but there was not enough room to even sit down, and when we rested we took it by relays. However, with songs and cheers the train pulled out, and in spite of our cramped quarters we managed to be happy and enjoy our first glimpse of "La Belle France."

Vociferous were the exclamations of the French at every place we stopped. Women would draw their forefingers about their throats, signifying the cutting of that part of the human frame, with the word, "Allemand," signifying German. An old man, too old to serve in the army, made the motion of a bayonet thrust, informing us—at least we guessed that was what he meant—to so treat the hated Allemands. We were always surrounded by crowds of souvenir hunters, which did not dis-

turb us at first but before we had half finished our journey they became an unmitigated nuisance, and the boys were not long in letting them know their safety depended on the distance they kept away.

At last on a bleak, raw morning, we detrained at a spot where was witnessed a desperate encounter between the British and Germans in the early part of the war. A mile or so from the place is the town of Hazebrouck. It was here that the terrible toll of this conflict was brought home to us. Line after line of wooden crosses, with the names and regiments of the men who lay beneath, stretched for an appalling distance. Since then a fearful number of graves has been added, including thousands of our boys of Canada, following the battle of Ypres.

Later on I noticed the poppies that abound all through sunny France, waving their pretty heads between the crosses, which gave inspiration for that beautiful poem by Lieutenant John McCrae, originally published, I believe, in the *London Punch*. It is well worth repeating:

## IN FLANDERS FIELDS

In Flanders fields the poppies grow  
Between the crosses, row on row,  
That mark our place; while in the sky  
The larks still bravely singing fly  
Unheard amid the guns below.

We are the Dead! Short days ago  
We lived, felt dawn, saw sunset's glow,  
Loved, and were loved; and now we lie  
In Flanders fields.

Take up our quarrel with the foe;  
To you from failing hands we throw  
The torch — be yours to hold it high,  
If ye break faith with us  
We shall not sleep 'though poppies blow  
In Flanders fields.

After detraining we were placed in billets, ours consisting of an old barn. The near-by farm was being run by the women of the place, all the men folks being away in the trenches. These people must have made a small fortune, as the boys bought eggs, butter, coffee, etc., in abundance.

Our experiences in making change for our purchases uniquely expressed the old saying, "money talks," because the dealers everywhere seemed to

be thoroughly acquainted with the values of English currency, although they couldn't speak the language.

Here we stayed for a few days until our march to the trenches began. Nightly, as we lay, we could hear the boom of an occasional big gun, the rattle of rapid rifle fire, and now and again the peculiar metallic click and whirl of machine guns.

It was in this place that the clock-tower incident occurred: Someone noticed the hands of the clock on the east end of the tower moving strangely; two men were sent up to investigate. They did not return and a search was made for them. They could not be located, but suspicious sounds were heard up in the tower. The officers decided it was a case for the guns. One shell brought the tower tumbling down and with it came the bodies of two German spies and the men who had been sent to investigate. The spies had been using the hands of the clock for signaling purposes.



## CHAPTER XII

### MY BAPTISM OF FIRE

ON the morning before we set out for the trenches we were inspected by Sir John French and other well-known leaders of the British Army.

That night the guns roared, Maxims barked and rifles kept up an incessant fire all night. We began to have a very heartfelt idea of what we were in for and the tightening up of the faces of the men was distinctly perceptible, accompanied with ejaculations from some of the English Tommies in our battalion, such as "Gawd blime me, but it's gettin' close now."

Next day at about twelve o'clock we fell in, joined the remainder of the battalion in Hazebrouck, and the march to Armentieres commenced. This march will long be remembered by all who survived. Everyone was in great spirits, and songs and jokes were the order. Along the

cobbled roads we swung in full marching order, and the first part of the journey was accomplished with ease. But those awful cobbled roads began to tell their tale. They are paved with rough, uneven cobbles, and when a little rain has fallen a man goes slipping and sliding all over the place. A thin layer of mud makes it ten times worse; so by the time we had done fifteen miles, men began to lag. On and on we went, until at last the officers were obliged to halt the men.

As is usual, toward evening we felt better, and lustily informed the natives that, "The Gang's All Here;" "Here We Are Again;" and various choruses of a like nature were roared by us as we swung like one man into Armentieres. Here we received vociferous welcome from those fearless fighting men, the boys of the British regular army. Their welcome was a royal as well as a noisy one, because they shoved refreshing drinks and cigarettes into our hands, which were eagerly taken.

"What in blazes do you call this stuff?" I asked of a burly Tommy who had thrust a bottle of liquid at me.

“Wy, that, don’t you know? That’s beer, French beer.”

“The devil, you say!”

“’Pon my soul, it is.”

“Is the French fightin’ man anything like his beer?” I asked.

“Oh no, Gawd forbid,” said he, “for this damn stuff is as much like beer as kissin’ your own sister.”

And I thoroughly agreed with him, because although it looked like beer and smelt like beer, it was no more like beer than the kiss of a man’s sister would be when compared to the kiss of his sweetheart.

Our long march ended and we were billeted in the best billets I ever remember while abroad. It was the luck of our platoon to be billeted at an *estaminet*, or inn. The owner of this was somewhat of a naturalist, the walls of his house being hung with all kinds of valuable skins, cases of butterflies, etc. The people here were the acme of kindness. You may guess how we slept that night.

During our stay in this billet I was always very conscious of a curious frightened feeling, and as I looked at the carefree faces of my comrades, I often wondered if they felt as I did. Sometimes a dull, menacing boom, making the air vibrate, would cause a silence to fall and a far-away look in the eyes told me more emphatically than any words could that the rest of the boys were "thinking it over," probably just as hard as I was doing.

Next morning we had a grand breakfast, due to the kindness of Major, then Captain Hopkins. Before actually going into the trenches we were taken some thousand yards to the back of the first line and started to work at filling sandbags and generally improving the condition of the rear of our lines. Mile after mile at the back of the firing line, trenches are being improved in case of retirement. The Germans are doing the same, but they make theirs of concrete, so when grumbling at the slow progress of the Allies, just think for a moment of the tremendous task in front of them.

An occasional bullet would whistle over our heads as we worked, while some would imbed themselves in the mud around us. No one was hit and just at dusk we were marched back to our billets for one more night's rest before taking our places in the first line.

Engaged in conversation that night with the good Monsieur Prevot, the worthy host of the *estaminet*, was a man who looked the typical Tommy of the British Army. Of medium height, thickset, dark hair and dark moustache, he was about the last person one would suspect of being anything but the soldier he proclaimed himself to be. Soon he was hobnobbing with the boys, playing cards and telling them stories of the earlier days of the war.

He had been spending some little time there, but unlike all British soldiers he showed a strange neglect of his rifle, scarcely ever looking at it and much less cleaning it. This aroused the suspicion of Sergeant-major Demaille and the latter, coming into the *estaminet* one day and finding him there, began to question him. The man's

replies only heightened the S-M's suspicions and he was placed under arrest. That was the last we ever saw of him, but his was a short shrift. He paid the price for his daring.

To many people the work of a spy carries with it an odium that is unspeakably disgusting; his activities are associated with everything that is dirty, sneaking and contemptible. This, in my opinion, is true of all shades of spies except the man who operates in the battle lines. In this case he knows there is absolutely no shadow of a chance for his life if caught, and it requires a nerve that is brave indeed to engage in that type of the work. Spying, a soldier detests, but, while detesting, he is full of admiration for the courage of the spy.

The following day we fell in about four-thirty in the afternoon and started for, as we thought, the trenches. To stiffen our backs, as it were, we were ordered to fall in immediately beside the graveyard at Armentieres, where scores of little wooden crosses marked the resting places of the numberless children who were killed in the bom-

bardment. We were allowed to talk and smoke until we had gone some distance, then strict silence was kept. By and by we were halted and split up into sections, to minimize the effect of shell fire. The road was pitted with shell holes, these being full of water. The night being very dark, except when a flare would light up the country with its weird color for a moment, the men now and then would trip and fall with a muttered curse.

It was all quiet in front, but occasionally a burst of fire would wake the echoes and bullets would whiz over our heads. A few of them fell around us, but no one was hurt. It is a peculiar sensation to find yourself under fire for the first time. A man feels utterly helpless and at first he will duck his head at every whiz he hears. Of course ducking is useless, because if you hear the whiz of the pill, or the report of the rifle, you are still untouched, but every man who has ever experienced this will tell you that he could not help ducking even knowing how useless it was. I went so far as to put up my shoulders to cover my jaws, as if in a boxing stunt.

One of the British Tommies gave me a bit of brief but sound philosophy on ducking: "If you 'ear them, they won't 'urt you; if you don't 'ear them, you're dead." A little later on a bit of Irish humor was tragically mingled with ducking. A shell was coming, as an Irish soldier thought, straight for him, and he ducked, and the shell swept away the head of the man behind him. Said Paddy, "Shure it always pays to be polite." By and by we were halted and lead through a kind of tunnel into a barn. Here were a bunch of British, most of them having taken part in the Mons retirement. We found we were to act as a reserve with these men, that is, in case of attack we would make our way to the front line as quickly as possible. A trench led from both sides of this barn, but it was so skilfully concealed that no one would have dreamt of its being there. In this barn the Tommies had made themselves very comfortable, having straw to lie on, and fires with which to boil tea. We soon were great friends with the regulars, who gave us many valuable tips for active service.



We stayed here for twenty-four hours, the only excitement being a German shell dropped in the separator of an antiquated threshing machine, some two hundred yards to our rear, and the way those thresher men bolted makes me think that they are probably running yet.

The natives at that time farmed away, just about five hundred yards from the firing line, as if nothing was out of the ordinary. I saw them finishing land in one part of a small field, while shrapnel was spraying the other part, and at that time a family was living in every house around there. Since then, however, both they and the town of Armentieres are just dust heaps, being shelled to a finish at about the same time as the great bombardment of Ypres.

At nightfall we trudged silently from the barn and without any casualties succeeded in reaching our hospitable *estaminet*. The good lady of the house, after counting us over, prepared hot coffee for us.

In this town is the French and Belgian burial ground and at that time it was full of statuary;

even the humblest grave had its own little shrine above it. The monuments were very fine, particularly a huge marble one which had been erected by the sons of Armentieres for those who had died for *La Patrie*, at Quatre Bras, Algiers, the Crimea and the war of 1870. It was a beautiful monument, some thirty feet high, and could not possibly be of any advantage to either side, yet the Germans, a few weeks afterwards, shelled this graveyard, utterly destroying all the beautiful monuments and exhuming piecemeal dozens of bodies.

A crucifix, with the figure of the Savior, was in the most conspicuous place in that burial ground; it was easily twenty feet high; yet it remained untouched throughout the whole bombardment. In not one single instance (and I think all returned soldiers will say the same) have I seen the figure of the Savior anything but intact, no matter how destructive the shelling has been. The cross itself has been smashed to dust, but the figure has never been hit. This is very remarkable, but a fact.



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#### INSTRUMENTS OF WAR AND PEACE, WORKING SIDE BY SIDE

The reaping machine is harvesting the grain. The monster gun is also reaping—but the harvest is death. A German shell is exploding on the right.



The next afternoon at four-thirty came the order, "Fall in," and we knew we were booked now for the real thing. Rifles were examined, ammunition inspected, and as night was falling we swung through the town and across the bridge, temporarily erected by the engineers, the Germans having destroyed the original one in their retreat. The townspeople turned out *en masse* apparently none the worse for a few shells that had been flying among them a few hours before. *Bon chance* was shouted from all sides, to which we replied in English.

Being very much on the short side and all the more conspicuous by the majority of the boys being very much on the tall side, I came in for much chaff from the people who christened me *le picannin*. It became a great joke among my chums and I had to submit to a lot of chaff. At last we came to the hospital and the order was passed down the line for silence. Again splitting into small sections we trudged silently along, now and again stumbling into the shell craters.

Once we were placed at the side of the road to

let the casualties go by. Nothing is so weird as to meet those stretcher bearers on a quiet night at the back of the line. Not a word is spoken, the bearers stepping as one man. Up in the air goes a flare and the faces of everyone take on a ghastly green tint, accentuating the expression of suffering. It is a wonderful experience, and only a soldier can realize the heroic stoicism of a wounded comrade. Racked with pain they may be, but with the inevitable smoke between their lips, they will grin at you as they pass.

If you want to imagine what a bullet wound feels like try and think that you have got it and then imagine what it is to be carried over the bumpy road, dumped down time after time, so that your bearers may drop on the ground and live to carry you out. The Huns fire on everything that moves, and every time a flare rises, down your bearers must drop or run the certainty of being sniped. Sometimes in a big action men will lie for days, some with desperate wounds, sniped at if they show the slightest movement, and then comes the journey from the dressing station

along a road raked with shell fire. Just try and imagine it, and if you see a soldier back from hell kicking over the traces, and going a little bit wild, just think of what he has been in and endured.

In my case the sight of these casualties caused me to shiver, for there I was in perfect health and strength, yet how long before I would be like one of these boys!

However, we were not given much time for thinking. "Keep absolutely quiet and no talking," was the whispered command that was passed among us. The blackness of the night made seeing anything clearly absolutely impossible. No smoking was permitted and if a machine gun opened on the road we were to throw ourselves flat. This was most encouraging as the road had a beautiful layer of nice clinging mud, while pools of water, from two to ten feet deep, were scattered everywhere. We were all green troops and when the "plut-plut-ping" began over our heads, the ducking would have done credit to Jim Corbett.

By and by we steadied up, especially as we

heard some British Tommies, who were returning from their spell in front, enjoying a quiet laugh at our expense. However, as one of them put it, "The'll get used tew it lad, we were as bad at start. Goot neet." "Silence there!" from our Old Man. I had a kind of "home and mother" feeling in my stomach and I expected every minute to hear the machine guns begin to bark. We had been told that a strip of railway about two hundred yards from the trenches was a veritable death trap, the Allemands peppering it about every hour. It was on the road to our trenches, so we were obliged to go over it. When we came to the spot I fancied that that strip of land was about a mile across instead of about ten yards.

Judge of our astonishment, when the door of a house opened and a woman came out and stood calmly watching us pass, mind you, only two hundred yards from our own front lines and three hundred yards from the Germans. And there I was trying to make myself as small as a midget, and she standing calmly erect as if butterflies instead of bullets were flying around. Thought I,



“If that woman can stand like that, surely I can at least walk erect.” I did so, but it was a terrible effort.

A guide from the Tommies took us in hand and the pace he set was a caution. He was used to it, but we were on strange ground, and it was as dark as pitch. We carried our rifles at the trail as a guide to the man behind. Now and then our worthy guide would stop to get over or through some obstacle, causing a momentary halt. Bang! goes the rifle of the man in front of me, the butt catching me plumb in the stomach. Swearing came from all around as some of the boys would run their noses onto a pair of boots or something equally hard in the valises of the men in front, or the muzzle of a rifle prodded someone in the back.

The upshot of it all was that Fritz grew suspicious and up went a flare, but we were not spotted except by a few snipers who sent over a few souvenirs, which luckily none of us accepted. The pain in my tummie obliged me to stay behind for a time, and when I felt able to go on, the boys

were disappearing in front. The man who dug his rifle butt into my stomach was named "Slaughter" and he gave me solid proof that he earned his name that night, for my tummie was sore for weeks.

I was afraid I was going to get lost, so I mustered up all my strength to try and run after the boys, and after covering a few yards, over I went into a Jack Johnson hole (crater made by 16 inch shell, often fifteen to thirty feet wide and as deep). There wasn't much water in the hole, but lots of mud; my rifle was absolutely choked with it and I was in an awful mess. I managed to flounder out, and on going a short distance I was challenged and found I had come right into the trench we were to occupy.

## CHAPTER XIII

### IN THE FRONT LINE

A GRUFF voice with a broad Lancashire accent asked me who I was. I replied, "Fifth Canadians." "Aw reet," said he, "the'll be on the next trick wi' me," meaning I was to be sentry with him. A bunch of these British Tommies was out at the back filling sandbags, and their utter contempt for the occasional shots fired at them soon told me they were regulars. My companion and I soon became great chums, he explaining to me the various things about trench life.

As we talked, a succession of flares suddenly leapt skyward, the whole district being lit up by the green flare. The boys filling sandbags raced for the trench, grabbed their rifles and stood ready for anything that might come along. The Germans were sending a perfect fusillade over. It

was no attack, however. They had simply sighted our listening patrols and had commenced firing on them.

My turn for sentry came, and with as little of myself showing as possible, I peered over the parapet. Of course, looking over the top is certain death during the day, but darkness makes it possible. It was a curious feeling I had. I could see nothing but inky blackness except when a flare went up. I would search the ground in front of me while the light lasted, then duck as the inevitable snipers took a pot shot.

For an hour I stood sentry, then was relieved. Five of my companions and myself huddled into a partially completed dugout in a vain effort to keep warm. While getting up to the trenches the weight of the equipment kept us warm, also the heavy traveling, but standing still in that trench was a different matter. The mud rose to my thighs in places. Inside the dugout was a small charcoal fire, but very little heat came from that. The night was bitterly raw and cold, and wet and muddy as we were, we could not keep from shiv-



*From photo by the author.*

OUR NEST (DUGOUT) IS ON THE RIGHT



*From photo by the author.*

MEALS ARE ANY TIME WHEN ONE IS HUNGRY.



ering, while I lost all feeling in my feet. Then we found we could get a certain amount of heat in the dugout, as the floor was dry, by hugging each other tightly. While it would be hard to conceive of a bunch of boys feeling more miserable than we did, yet I have to smile to myself when I think of those moments. With our arms clasping each other tightly, leaning over a little charcoal fire, our teeth chattering like monkeys, almost keeping time to the rattle of the machine guns, we managed to keep our heads. It is wonderful what men will endure when sweet life is the price.

It was while trying to keep warm that first night over the little charcoal fire that I first learned how to handle my bayonet, if I was ever to be lucky enough to ram it so far into a German belly that I couldn't pull it out handily. The lesson came from a corporal of the East Lanks (Lancashires) who was explaining the advantages of the Lee-Enfield rifle and bayonet over the Ross, and his description was so realistically vivid that my teeth forgot to chatter with the chill I had.

"You see," he said, "if you push it in too far,

you canna get it oot again, because this groove on the side o' it makes the 'ole air-tight; as soon as it is jabbed into a man the suction pulls the flesh all over it and you canna chuck it oot."

"Well, what would you do if you couldn't get it out and another mug was making for you?" I asked.

"Why if a twist won't do it, stick your foot on the beggar and wrench it out; if that won't do it, just pull the trigger a couple of times and there you are—she will blow out."

"Did you ever have any trouble yourselves?"

"Oh, aye. I remember at Landrecies, in the 'ouse to 'ouse fightin', my chum, Topper, and me were backed into an alley, with a wall at our back and a bunch of hulking Prussians pressing us hard. Some more of the boys fell on them from the side, but Topper and me had all we could do with the two or three that took a fancy to us. The Pruss that took a fancy to me raised the butt of his gun to smash me nut and I took a chance an' lunged. I lunged too 'ard and I 'ad the trouble I've just been tellin' ye, and in my funk I did



just what I told ye, I twisted — she stuck; I wrenched and tugged — she stuck; and if I 'adn't fired and got the bloomin' blade free, I wouldn't a' been 'ere tellin' yer about it."

"And why couldn't I do the same with this one?" I asked, referring to my Ross bayonet.

"It's too broad at the point. The man that gave ye that dam'd thing might just as well 'ave passed sentence o' death on yer in a 'and to 'and go."

As a loyal Canadian I was at first inclined to resent the imputation that our rifle was in any way inferior to anything on earth, but the corporal's prophecy proved only too true within a short month.

With another spell at sentry the night wore on and at last day began to break. The morning was foggy and raw, but our hearts were cheered by the coming up of the rum. Yes, you may be horrified, good people who read this, but that rum is a God-send, and so you too would think if you had been standing with feet that you did not feel you possessed, shivering, plastered with mud and wet to

the skin, standing with rifle ready an hour before dawn, expecting that any minute you might have to line the trenches and fight for your life. Under those conditions you may understand why a man needs something to warm the blood in his veins.

One of the Tommies, my sentry chum, stole out under cover of the fog and returned with a jar of water. We built a fire (we were allowed fires as long as the fog lasted) and dined sumptuously on bully beef and strong tea. One of the regulars, a man about thirty years old, was alternately cursing the Germans and trying to warm his feet. Apparently he did not care whether he was hit or not, as he stood at the back of the trench, his entire body exposed, his chief concern in life apparently being to get warm.

In his efforts to get his blood circulating he said he would rather be home again than standing all night in that bloody trough of water and mud. Something in his tone about home suggested a thought to one fellow who queried: "You would rather be home again? Is it nearly as bad as this?"



*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

#### WHAT A FIRST-LINE TRENCH LOOKS LIKE.

This picture is typical of the first line of an European battle-field. Barbed-wire entanglements are everywhere. Sandbags are piled high on the top of the trench.



“Well, to tell you the truth,” he said, “I was ’oping I’d ’ave a bit of a change, don’t you know, and a sort o’ relief from Lizer’s everlastin’ tongue, but, strike me pink, if I wouldn’t rather ’ave ’er dear old tongue than this—yes, even on a Saturday night, when I’d come ’ome drunk and me wages spent.”

A rather tough-looking nut who was listening to the dialogue chimed in contemptuously: “Huh, she jaws yer, does she? Wy that’s nuffink. When I was a-leavin’ of Sary Jane I was a-bid-din’ ’er good-bye, an’ just to make a showin’ I tries to kiss ’er, but, pepper me eye-balls, she lands me a swipe on the jawr an’ sez, ‘Kiss yer mother; if yer licks the Germans as bad as you’ve licked me, you won’t be gone long.’”

After the dissertations on married life by the happy benedicts, our suicidal friend of the East Lanks, who, reckless as ever, was still standing on the parados, which is the step in the rear side of the trench and, therefore, had three-quarters of his body exposed, suddenly yelled, “There’s your Allemands;” our boys jumped to his side to see

our friends on the other side of the street. Crack! and down fell the Tommy, and, a fraction of a second later, Slaughter, holding his hand to his jaw, slid forward slowly and convulsively into the trench. It was my first experience with the reality of war and my feeling was one of horror, then curiosity at what a stricken man looked like, then blind fury at everything German.

The King's Own man was lying on his back with a hole through his cheek, the cheek-bone completely smashed. I hastened over to him, placed my overcoat under his head and started to bandage his face. He was badly hurt, but worth a dozen dead men, and was the recipient of hearty congratulations on his luck in getting such a Blighty (sufficiently wounded to take him home); it being evident that his wish to be home with his wife was soon to be realized.

For quite a long time after I had a constant reminder of him and his wound in the blood-stained condition of my overcoat, which was soaked through at the time.

My friend, Slaughter, was hit in the side of

the neck, the bullet passing down his back and out of the loin. He had a narrow escape and it finished his active service there and then. I saw him later in England on military police duty and looking fine, but he will never again carry a pack.

To illustrate the peculiar course a bullet will sometimes take, this will serve as an example. The King's Own man had his left arm extended pointing to the German lines and the bullet first passed through the sleeve of his coat, then through to his cheek, came out at his ear, passed over in an oblique direction, hitting Slaughter in the neck, passing out at his loin, then through two sandbags and embedded itself in a third. We dug it out and one of the boys kept it as a souvenir.

A volley of sulphurous language warned me that my guardian angel, Morgan, was approaching. He had been farther up the trench hobnobbing with the fellows, and on hearing of Slaughter's mishap came to see how he was faring. In reality he had come over to see if I was safe and sound, but, as usual, concealed his real feelings in a mask of profanity.

“Well, runt, you’re pretty white about the gills, ain’t ye? You should have stayed home with your mother instead of coming out on a man’s job. Poor little fellow! Shall I get you a glass of water?”

“O, go to hell, you black-whiskered devil. Your face is too damned homely to be spoiled, or I’d smash it with this rifle.”

I wasn’t feeling any too chipper as it was, but I knew full well that it was his own peculiar method of displaying his affection for me, and thus was it answered.

The day passed uneventfully, except for a lively duel between a bunch of regulars and Canucks and some frisky snipers in a house about three hundred yards off. None of our boys were hit and they silenced Fritz for awhile. Every time we moved the snipers would let go, but we had become wary and no further casualties happened. The day turned out fairly warm, for which we were very thankful. Toward half-past four in the afternoon one of the Tommies near me remarked, “It’s time he started the Wood-



pecker.” “Woodpecker! What do you mean?” “Oh,” said he, in a matter of fact tone, “they have a machine gun laid on the way out and he takes a few sighters to get her right for us when we go out.” “Lord!” thinks I, “more of it.”

True enough, about four thirty-five Fritz started the “Woodpecker” and we could see the bullets striking the corner of an old house, just where we were to pass that night. You can imagine how I felt when our relief came and we started our journey out. We stooped as low as possible, expecting every minute to be opened on, but for some reason he did not let her speak to us that night. One of the fellows, however, had three fingers sniped off by a stray bullet before we were out of the danger zone. It was almost worth the price to hear the exuberance of his swearing; but he was lucky; it was a comfortable Blighty for him, and some of us were positively green with envy.

An amusing thing happened on our way out. We were green at that time, of course, and we went down the road and across the country as if

we were treading on eggs, our heads between our shoulders and our backs humped. Morgan walking directly behind me, remarked, "What the devil are you ducking for? You don't have to duck, you poor little mite; they can't hit you, you're too small." My retort was big enough to suit even him.

Presently we met a big bunch of the Lancashire Fusileers going in; they were striding along, heads up, talking freely to one another as if out for an ordinary day's work. Immediately we saw their attitude we determined we were not going to be disgraced. Up went our heads and I can honestly say every man walked along like a seasoned veteran. But in order that this record may be true in every detail I desire to say that it was the hardest effort I ever put forth in my life.

That finished our baptism in the trench brotherhood. Twenty-four hours for a start and not many casualties; in the whole battalion we had two killed and fourteen wounded.

We were taken back to billets in Armentieres and next day we rested and sported with the

people, fell in at dusk and after two days marching, trench digging, etc., were marched to take our own line of trenches at a place called Fleur Baix.

In the afternoon before we started, Morgan and I agreeing for once in our career, set out to have a "time." A few hundred yards from our lodging was an *estaminet* kept by two Belgian girls; these girls were already a by-word in the army for their tremendous physique. We entered and a lively scene indeed it was. On the floor were Tommies and Johnnie Canucks dancing to a rag-time tune played by an American musical box. One of the famous sisters, as well as what few girls were available, were dancing with the soldiers and some of the boys were lending an accompaniment by keeping time, hammering the floor with the wooden shoes worn by the peasantry.

"Hello, runt," from one; "Come in, Shorty," from another, while my immediate pals set up a howl of welcome. But the acme of my welcome was reached when the other of the giant sisters, leaning over the counter of the *estaminet* and greeting me, "Hello, chick," almost the only

English words she knew, grabbed me with one hand, pulled me half way over the counter, hoisted me with perfect ease clear over and sat me gently down on a chair at the back. I was like a baby in her grasp, and you can imagine the side-splitting roars that ensued. I felt so humiliated that had I been able I would gladly have smacked her face, but that was physically out of the question. However, I made the best of my uncomfortable feelings for the moment and managed to enjoy myself thoroughly while I was there, because the hospitality of the sisters knew no bounds; everything they had to eat or drink was at our disposal; they seemed to be unable to do enough for us.

My round of pleasure that afternoon ended with an exhibition dance by "Shorty" and the Giantess of Lebezet, as announced by one of the boys, and the way that girl whirled me off my feet was uproariously appreciated by the audience, and in my final whirl she wound up by catching me and hoisting me up in the air and imprinting a sound smack on my lips. I must hasten to add that this favor from the perspiring amazon was

not at all to my liking, but I couldn't very well protest for two reasons: First, I was utterly helpless in her grasp and, second, it might have been poor taste. So I joined in the laugh.

Much happened during our two days out, but do not think because we were not in the trenches that we were out of danger. In a quiet time the safest place sometimes is the very front line, as the enemy is often no more than twenty yards away and neither side dare shell the other for fear of hitting their own men.

On our march from Armentieres there came a blinding snow storm, together with a wind that seemed strong enough to take us off our feet. It was almost dark and we were compelled to halt, as the transports coming the opposite way were held up. We sheltered as best we could, but it was a muddy wet bunch of boys that tramped into Salle late that night, where we rested till next morning. As usual, we were placed in barns, and I was fortunate enough to get a fine bunch of straw. I didn't require any rocking to sleep that night.

Next morning a bunch of us slipped out and dined on the best in a partly demolished *estaminet*. Having a good working knowledge of French, if the people speak slowly, I acted as interpreter for the boys. If I did not remember the exact word, I would say it in English. As Tommy Atkins had been very chummy with the natives here, they had acquired some decidedly Billingsgate English; so in a mixture of bad French and English profanity we got along fairly well. It was side-splitting though to hear our hostess speaking pure French interlarded with fearful oaths of profanity in English, the nature of which she was entirely ignorant. She, poor soul, imagined she was speaking our tongue very well.

Another luxury came our way in the shape of a bath and complete change of clothing. We took our ablutions in the big brewery vats and barrels. Here was the water wagon with a vengeance. After a grueling afternoon of bayonet fighting practice we were away again till at last the now familiar star shells told us that we were going to exchange greetings with Fritz once more.



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#### GERMAN SHELL EXPLODING NEAR BRITISH BATTERY.

The Germans are trying to get the range of this hidden battery. Two of the Tommies of the gun crew are taking cover to avoid injury from the flying bits of shell.





It was not till next morning that we found where we were. Tremendous, ear-splitting crashing of artillery was shaking the very ground under our feet.

Our own artillery at this time was entirely too inadequate to suitably answer the thunderous message of the enemy. To give some idea of the odds against us in those days, and how we were out-gunned, it is only fair to say to the people who were so ready to criticize the Allies that, apart from the wonderful French seventy-five millimeter guns, our artillery was practically *non est*. The Germans had guns ranging from fifteen pounds to the gigantic howitzers hurling a shell of 1,800 pounds, with an unlimited supply of ammunition.

It is a well-known fact that for months the average per gun was about six shells per day. Ah! many a gallant lad might be alive today if he had been properly covered by artillery in those days! And you, dear reader, do not forget, when glorifying in the deeds of America's brave lads, that it is unfair to compare present conditions

with those dark days, for in fairness to our dead, it must be said that you in America are learning war from the nations who have paid for their experience by bitter losses.

At our back were a few of these sixty-pounders, but, few as they were, the very earth trembled at their detonation, making our ears ring and our heads ache. There is a peculiar metallic ring in the report of these guns which seems to split the drums of one's ears. It causes one to be strangely irritable, and quarrels often took place which otherwise never would have happened, the sole cause of which was shell-shock.

The curious sustained roar of fire and answering fire fills a soldier with awe, much the same feeling as of a man viewing a mighty cataract for the first time. The very ground shakes and if a man is standing on a hard road, he will be repeatedly lifted from the ground by the shock. Gun crews suffer from gun-shock and men are often sent down to recover from, not so much the bursting shells of the enemy, as from the effect of the deafening voices of their own pets.

This effect is evidenced in a number of different ways, the most common being a trickling of blood from the ear, which in nearly every instance is the prelude for ear trouble for the remainder of one's days. The dazed effect is shown by a shivering and shaking of the entire body, accompanied with a sort of vague, expressionless staring from which men have been known to suffer for months after they have left the firing line.

It was my good fortune once to see one of the first of the British heavies to reach the firing line, and to be present when it was fired for the first time. Naturally, we were all agog to see one of these monsters, for we had heard for weeks the rumor that they were coming. It was one fine day in early spring that the first 15.2 rifle rumbled into the village in which we were billeted. I did not see it arrive, but Morgan came to tell me.

"See the little pea-shooter?" said his swarthiness.

"No, has she arrived?"

"Yes; going to see her?"

"I might if I went in good company."

“Clever, ain’t yuh? But who can explain pea-shooters better than your Uncle Dudley?”

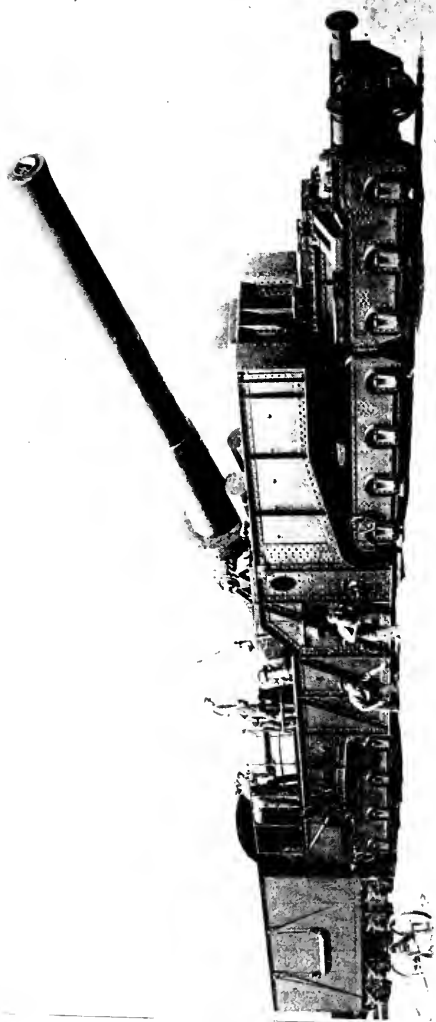
“Yes, your knowledge extends possibly to pea-shooters, but this thing is a man’s gun.”

“Well, how in hell can you understand it? Nobody ever mistook *you* for a man, you poor little runt,” the last with such a look of compassion that I had to laugh.

“All right, come on.”

Quarreling all the way we arrived at the gun emplacement. The gun supports rested on a solid concrete base, while the muzzle tilted at an angle of about forty-five degrees. The system of hoisting the enormous shells I could not fathom, but a mass of wheels and other machinery seemed to do the business as if by magic. The gun had been hauled by a powerful tractor to its present position. Brawny six-foot marines of the Royal Marine Artillery sweated as they hauled and levered to get everything in shape to make their pet comfortable while she passed the time of day with the Boches.

It was all that four of these husky marines



*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

### A MONSTER BRITISH GUN.

Giant guns such as this are moved about on specially constructed railways, which are always built ahead, so that when the enemy is driven back the guns can go forward instantly.



could do to roll the enormous shells by the aid of crowbars.

The gun, emplacement and impedimenta were painted to deceive the keen eye of the Hun airmen. A wonderful medley of colors, but experience had taught the Allies by this time the proper shading to use to make the whole thing merge with the landscape.

At last everything was ready and the monster was prepared to send over her first calling card. The marines stepped away from the gun to the rear of an old barn about twenty yards off, telling us to follow. The sergeant of the marines instructed us to lie down. The ground being rather muddy, we chose to disregard his advice. The gun roared, we were knocked flat by the concussion, and when we had collected our wits sufficiently to look around we found that the barn had been knocked flat too.

On another occasion, Morgan and I, at great risk to ourselves, had stolen a liberal ration of tea, with its necessary dressing of sugar, from C Company's supply. It must be remembered that the

heavy artillery ranges from two to five miles back of the line and men may be in billets with these guns behind them. Morgan suggested that we make our hot tea between two walls that were yet standing and we took an old pail, and made a fire in it, and proceeded to brew our tea. Just as the nectar was giving out a most fragrant odor and causing us some misgivings lest other prowlers should spot us, the heavies at that identical moment started an argument with the Boche. The air concussion drove straight between the two walls where the tea-party was in progress and carried the fire, the tea and the tea-party clear out on to the cobbled road, where all the elements of fire, water, tea and tea-party were most damnably mixed.

We both involuntarily exclaimed “—— ———  
—— ——— ———.”



## CHAPTER XIV

### SAXONS AND PRUSSIANS

**WE** were to take over the trenches from the West Yorkshire Regiment. An illustration of the wonderful spy system of the Germans came under our notice at this time. The West Yorks had no idea that any Canadians were in Flanders, yet on the departure of a relieved German battalion opposite them, the latter shouted across to the West Yorks in good English, "Good-bye, West Yorks, the Canadians will relieve you tomorrow night."

We duly relieved the West Yorks shortly after midnight. The Saxons were in front this time and they gave us no trouble at all. In fact, our listening patrols found a notice fixed on their wire reading, "We will not fire if you don't. Save your ammunition for the Prussians." We could walk up the road any time at night and never be even

sniped at. Indeed, for the three days we faced the Saxons, we had only one casualty, a man had his brains blown out, and unfortunately it was due to an accident caused by himself. These Saxons were certainly a different kettle of fish to the Prussians or Bavarians.

I haven't yet mentioned that although we were an infantry battalion, originally we were cavalry and we still kept our name, "Fifth Western Cavalry," as designated by the yellow letters on our shoulders. It was a big joke to our comrades of the Second Infantry Brigade, and indeed to the whole division, and we were designated under various titles, "The Disappointed Fifth," "The Wooden Horse Marines," "The Fifth Mounted Foot," etc. *ad libitum*, and we were always being chipped about it. Judge of our astonishment, when we had taken our places in the trench and were preparing for the night's duties, a hail came from the German trenches. We listened and in perfect English a voice yelled, "Hello, you Fifth, what have you done with your horses?" And in the morning, when peering across to the German

parapet through a loophole or periscope, the lookout called our attention to something moving on the German parapet. As it grew lighter we saw that it was a little wooden horse—a child's toy they had probably looted from some house.

“Open fire on it someone; see what they'll do,” said the lookout.

Two or three of the boys opened up on the dummy horse and knocked it down into their trench. A roar of laughter went up from our boys a moment or two later when the dummy reappeared, swathed in bandages from head to tail. Fritz displayed a rare sense of humor in this instance and we enjoyed the joke immensely.

At night those fellows would sing songs and our boys would reply. Going along the road I could hear them jeering and chaffing and then start singing to one another. However, on the third night the Prussians relieved our friends, the Saxons, and the difference was *striking*.

Back came our friends, the snipers, and bursts of rapid fire all night kept one from being bored—or, I might say, kept one bored. Several sen-

tries at different spots on the road were killed at their posts. At one spot a man suddenly leapt out of the darkness onto an isolated post and tried to disarm our sentry, Mitchell, only to receive six inches of steel in his stomach for his pains.

We were never allowed to go anywhere alone, as shots came from every direction and it was suspected that men in civilian clothes were sniping at the back of our lines. One day, at this time one of these incidents was brought very close to me.

Morgan burst into the old cellar as I lay dozing in the early morning:

"What the devil do you want now?" I said irritably. For once he did not reply in his usual manner, he was so full of his news. "What do you think, chum, do you remember that guy that was plowing in the field over yonder? Well, he is the devil that is responsible for the casualties in the ration party and those sentries."

"How is that?" I asked.

"You know Lieutenant M—? Well, the other day the lieutenant looked over at the fellow plow-

ing and he noticed something that we mucks never tumbled to before. Now, think it over, chum; use your own brains; don't you remember that field was never shelled with anything but shrapnel and light shrapnel at that?"

"God! yes," says I, "that's right."

"Well, the lieutenant got suspicious, took over a file of the kids from the cross roads farm and goes over to investigate."

"Yes, yes, go on."

"He reaches the fellow plowing and something in the man's face told him that he had hit it right. Well, you know that straw he had wound around the plow handles and down to the mold board? Well, shoved down in the straw was one of those damned Mauser carbines; you remember the kind the A. S. C. used in Africa? Well, the minute the lieutenant laid his hand on the plow handle, the bloke's face turned ashy gray, and when he grabbed the carbine the dog turned green and flopped down with funk, and then the lieutenant was sure of his man."

A light dawned on me as Morgan stopped for

want of breath, as there came back to me the memory of the dead sentry I found when I went to relieve him at that very cross roads.

“For God’s sake! What did they do with the cur?”

“Well, I don’t know for sure, but it’s a safe guess, as they have taken his horses for transport work and you can bet he will do no sniping forevermore.”

This was only one of many instances where Germans use all sorts of devices to “get” our boys in the back.

Our billet came in for the German gunners’ attention next day and a woman walking up the road was killed. Such a scene of heart-rending grief on the part of the woman’s husband and children I do not want to see again.

Carrying barbed wire at night over that awful mud and by those gaping craters was our task and this time it was dangerous work as we were exposed constantly. We were in for five days of it this trick. Big Bill Skerry seemed to fit naturally into dangerous jobs and Bill was the non-com.

in the barbed wire gang. His duties took him out in front every night in No Man's Land and his work together with the gang was to repair the wire, set up new wire, cut the enemy's wire, and generally do his damndest to cause Fritz trouble with his own wire.

I was standing in the trench, resting after one of our journeys, when a big figure hoisted itself over the parapet and dropped by my side. It was Bill.

"Hello, Bub," said he, "what do you think of this?" showing me the side of his jersey and pants. A machine gun had narrowly missed cutting him to pieces and the whole of the left side of his clothes was simply riddled; his escape was nothing short of miraculous; in fact, it was uncanny. Bill silently rolled a cigarette and smoked awhile without saying anything. Suddenly, with a "So long, Bub," ("Bub" was my pet name with all my intimates) Bill started to mount the parapet again.

"Where on earth are you going to now?" I asked with a gasp.

"I'm going to try and get that machine gun."

I heard and saw nothing of him until daylight, when he brushed past me.

"Did you get the gun, Bill?"

"I didn't get the gun," he said with a grim smile, but—pointing to his bayonet blade—"there's the gunner." Sure enough it was stained a deep red.

Poor Bill! he was always taking chances of that kind and he always got away with them.

During this time we fed sumptuously as we were bagging hares every day, while potatoes, leeks, onions, etc., were still in good condition in parts of the field.

On our last night in this billet I came almost to earning the D. C. M. (distinguished conduct medal). I was on sentry the two hours after midnight. One has to be very wide awake so near the line, and every little thing that looks in any way suspicious must be investigated. The night was quiet in our own lines, but away to the left a tremendous cannonade and rifle firing was going on. An occasional German souvenir would whine



above my head. Things that look very simple and plain at two o'clock in the afternoon, when the sun is shining, have a very different appearance at two o'clock in the morning, on the front line. At the end of my beat was a huge yew bush, giving the place a somber, weird effect. As I was turning my back on the bush during one of my rounds, every single hair of my closely cropped skull rose on end, while my scalp literally crawled, as a rustling noise came from the bush. My first instinct was to start for the south of France, as quickly as my legs could take me, but reason and duty came to my rescue. Still terrified, a blind fury took possession of me at the thing that scared me. Holding my rifle and bayonet at the "ready," I ran into the bush at the top of my speed and lunged with all my might into its depth, being brought up suddenly and sharply by a forked branch under my chin.

The result of my charge was a melancholy meow, and I cursed softly, but with infinite relief at the cause of my panic. Thinking the cat might be a good companion, I made overtures by softly

calling to her, and nothing loath she came, and when dawn broke a small figure in khaki might have been seen strolling slowly up and down the road, with a huge black cat alternately dodging between his legs and rubbing her sleek hide against his muddy puttees.

## CHAPTER XV

### TRAINING FOR RUNNER

OUR next move was to the town of E——, the best town we had yet “honored” with our presence. We reached here in the dead of night and awoke the sleeping inhabitants by lustily informing them that, “Here We Are Again.” Another classic of the Canadian Division went echoing over the place, a well-known American hymn—“Hail, Hail, the Gang’s All Here.” Twenty-four hours had not passed before the long-suffering citizens were only too well aware that the gang was all there.

It was while we were stopping at the city of E—— on one of our rest billets that I first began my training as a company runner. These runners were formed after Neuve Chapelle. In that engagement disastrous results followed the cutting of all telephone communication, and it was

suggested that men be trained to run with messages when other means could not be used. Being small, though not slight, and active, I was chosen for this duty and my training began. In such condition were we that in two weeks' time I could carry forty pounds comfortably at a jog trot for a distance of five miles.

Of the utmost importance was the carrying and delivering of messages correctly. An amusing instance of the difficulty of doing this occurred while being trained. We were running at relays and we would do our work exactly as it would be done in the heat of battle, and the first man was given the message, "To O. C. Seventh Battalion: Am held up by barbed wire entanglements; send reinforcements to my right." When the message was delivered by the seventh and last man of the relay, the officer receiving it got the following astounding information, "Am surrounded by wild Italians; lend me three- and fourpence till to-night."

A period of intense training followed, chiefly instruction in trench making, including attacking

and defending, and for us runners a grueling spell of practice in carrying messages and endurance work.

At this place we would dash along the canal bank in our early morning's training, exchanging greetings in execrable French with the owners of the barges that floated lazily down the stream. Next, we would meet a bunch of Sikhs, who would gravely extend greetings in their dignified manner. Farther along a group of Hindoo cavalrymen, riding their horses with superb grace, would smile at us, informing us in what English they knew that they would sooner ride than run, with which we agreed. Huge Pathans, dwarfing us by their tremendous height, would gaze in grave wonder at these foolish Feringhees.

After our run we would strip and, shouting with health and laughter, hurl ourselves into the icy waters of the canal, much to the wonder of the ladies of the barges, who gazed unabashed at our naked beauty.

With these splendid open-air exercises we were continually undergoing, it is little wonder that

the resources of the commissariat were at times sadly taxed to meet the voracious demands of our appetites.

After breakfast the runners would fall in, in front of the battalion, for the purpose of carrying messages backwards and forwards—all done with the idea of still further improving the discipline necessary for that most important work, which must be done without any errors as there is no room for excuses of any kind.

To many people the work of a runner is an unknown quantity but its tremendous importance is told by Neuve Chapelle. On March 10, 1915, the advance there and the fearful casualties to the British forces warned everyone of the nature of the German defenses. It was our first advance since November, 1914, but the ground gained wasn't worth the price paid. One of the causes of the premature holding up of the attacking troops was the failure of reinforcements to be hurled in at the proper time; this, in turn, was due to the fact that all telephonic communication had been cut off, and that although men



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#### MOVING A GUN INTO POSITION.

Work of this kind has to be done by man power, no other being available so near the front. The men are British Tommies, and the gun is a heavy fieldpiece.





were sent on foot with messages, it was found, if they arrived at their destination at all, that they bungled the message unless it were a written one. Since that time the staff has been thoroughly awake to the dire need of having properly trained runners who can endure the utmost strain for such duties.

Other regiments of the British Army were billeted here, and the endless stream of traffic was a sight to see. Infantry would swing through the streets—short thickset Tommies, tall and dignified Sikhs, gigantic Pathans, short, stocky Gurkhas, lithe Canucks, all making a wondrously interesting procession. Transports, limbers and ambulances rattled and roared unceasingly over the cobbles.

Many interesting scraps took place between various champions of regimental traditions. Here a burly Highlander and an English cavalryman exchanged fisticuffs for a minute, until a guard turned out and seized the unruly ones.

One enterprising Frenchman hung out a sign bearing the magic legend, "Bass in bottle—Guinness' Stout," and in half an hour the *estami-*

*net* was jammed with husky humanity. In less than no time the nectar was exhausted, but not the soldierly thirst, and the disappointed ones became so unruly that the services of the guard were again required. My good angel was with me that day, for I managed to possess myself of two full bottles of Guinness' and, keeping up the reputation of the battalion, it didn't cost me anything.

## CHAPTER XVI

BY THE WAYSIDE

**B**EING very much interested in the habits of the Indian troops I would often be found studying them at a respectful distance; their rigid laws of caste obliged me to keep somewhat apart from them. One day an unexpected opportunity of gratifying my curiosity came my way. Off duty for the afternoon I went for a stroll in the country and on turning a corner of the road I saw a big, tall Sikh gravely studying a tree by the roadside. He looked up as I approached, "Ram, ram, Sahib," said he. "Ram, ram, yourself," says I. It was all the English he knew and all the Indian I knew.

Seeing my jackknife at my side he managed to impress on me that he wanted to know if we used the jackknife for stabbing. By signs I replied that if necessary we would. Now, around the turban

of every Sikh I had noticed a ring of steel, about six inches in diameter, and my curiosity in regard to it had never been satisfied; here, I thought, was the chance to find out. Still standing at a respectful distance, I pointed to his turban, turning my hand round in imitation of a ring, and I indicated I wanted to know its use. Showing his splendid teeth for a second in a smile of understanding, he took the ring with a curious motion from his turban, and spinning it around his hand for the fraction of a second, he hurled it at the tree. My eyes bulged with astonishment, for the ring sank for half its diameter into the hard bole of the tree. I went to examine it, but dared not touch it for fear of offending some tradition connected with the ring. I found that the ring was really a circular knife, the outside edge being very keen and sharp, then thickening away to the inside. It will be seen that the whirling motion, preparatory to throwing, imparts a spin to this peculiar weapon. A man's arm, leg or head will part company with the trunk if struck.

My Sikh friend smiled gravely, recovered his

turban ring, bowed with grace, and with a "Salaam Sahib" turned with great dignity on his heel and stalked majestically away.

I also was mightily interested in the short, stocky Gurkhas, those wonderful troops from Nepal. These men, although small, are wonders of strength and endurance. Mountaineers and soldiers from childhood, their greatest joy is hand to hand combat. Perhaps a description of their favorite weapon, the terrible kukri, would be of interest. It is from fifteen to eighteen inches long, with a keen edge, tapering from a thickness at the back of about a quarter of an inch, to a razor-like edge. The handle or haft is of wood, bound tightly with copper wire, the distance between each band of wire being enough for a man's finger to snugly enclose itself around the handle. These little smiling men are equally adept at throwing or using the knife at close quarters.

It is useless for a man to try to escape by running, since before he has gone more than ten yards he is minus a head.

It was curious to watch them killing goats for

their meat supply. The goat would be browsing comfortably, when something would flash through the air, and to the onlooker's amazement, a headless goat would stagger a few yards and then fall. Later on, these troops were removed to warmer fronts, for the bleak winters of northern France and Flanders proved disastrous to the Indian constitution.

To show the resourcefulness of the Canadian soldier, the following incident is an illustration: Big Bill Skerry, one of the boys named Walworth, and Big Bill Bradley were left on the other side of the canal from their billets. At eight o'clock in the evening the bridge was drawn up making it impossible to cross. The three worthies approached the bridge end at about 10 P. M. Alas for human weakness, they had contrived to soften the heart of a French lady and she had given them a liberal portion of cognac. They were by no means intoxicated, but sufficiently stimulated to make the night echo with their songs of gladness. Arriving at the bridge they were challenged by a sentry. The following conversation took place:

From the sentry: "Halt, who are you?" "Go to hell," was the retort. "Well, I don't know about that," says the sentry, "but you're going in the clink, and you'll get hell from the Old Man." The reply was a splash as Skerry took a header into the icy waters of the canal. Like a flash Walworth and Bradley followed suit and the trio, fully dressed as they were, swam the canal. They almost ran from the frying pan into the fire, for they could not resist the temptation to jeer the sentry from the other side of the canal. They had apparently forgotten that another guard was stationed at the other bridge end. However, they melted into the night, stepping over our bodies as they entered the factory where we were sleeping, to receive a heartfelt cursing from those who were subjected to a shower from their dripping clothes.

Every day punctually at 6 P. M. the massed Kiltie Band would parade in front of the old Hotel De Ville or town hall. It was a curious sight. The stalwart Highlanders gazing neither to right nor left, swaggering up and down on the old cobbled square, Tommies, Canucks, French-

men, Gurkhas, Sikhs, Pathans and French Colonial troops would gather round and a babel of tongues would soar skywards. Just at the minute of six all would be hushed and a silence uncanny would hang over the place. The "Retreat" would sound, and the Highlanders would start their tatoo.

I have mentioned, I believe, the irritating parasites who so lovingly crowd in the seams of a man's shirt. Even these pests, which are an involuntary growth born of the natural heat of the body and accumulated moisture, become more or less endurable, and the inevitable fatalism of the soldier shows even in the matter of body lice.

Libby, Morgan, Fitzpatrick and Bill Skerry were holding a heated argument as to the relationship of the Canadian louse to its Flanders' prototype, and the discussion, which was held in the midst of a hunting expedition, took the turn that each was ready to back with money the assertion that the particular brand of louse with which he was associated day and night was superior in color, size, and ferocity to any that the others possessed.



"How about this gent?" says Morgan, exhibiting a particularly husky specimen that he had captured in the seam of his shirt. Morgan, as I have said, was dark in complexion almost to swarthinness.

"That dark streak down its back," chimes in Libby, "comes from boring through your damned black skin."

"Aw, hell," replied Morgan, "if their color is made by what they eat, then yours must be the color of a checker-board."

This was an allusion to Libby's partially gray hair.

"No, they ain't," said the imperturbable Libby, bringing out a specimen fully the equal of Morgan's, and actually lighter in color.

Morgan gazed thoughtfully down on his capture and, pushing his cap back on his head and speaking slowly, addressed it:

"You blankety-blank, I believe that it was you that browsed on the middle of my spine the last time I did sentry at headquarters in Marching Order. I hate like hell to do it, for you have

grown dear to me, and your color I know would delight the eye of a blinkin' artist, yet I can't allow you to divert me from my duty so as to endanger the efficiency of the forces of His Majesty, King George, of Great Britain and Ireland and the Dominions beyond the seas, and you must pay the penalty."

Snap! and it went the way of all flesh and the chase was resumed.

Although we had trained as infantry, most of us wore the riding pants or Bedford cords of a cavalry battalion. Being now a runner I appealed, as did the other runners, for something not so tight around the knees. We were given infantry slacks which allowed freer motion of the limbs. Our orders were to burn vermin-infested clothing, and although I was sure I had rid myself of mine, I decided, when I changed my clothes in the billet, to burn my riding pants.

Just as I was about to throw them into the fire a diminutive French gamin asked me to give him the pants. "All right, son," says I, handing him the garment. The boy was wise in his generation.



*From photo by the author.*

### A WINTERLY MORNING.



*From photo by the author.*

### WRITING TO THE OLD FOLKS AT HOME.



Turning them inside out he examined the seams, and, something arousing his suspicion, he hurled them into the fire as if something had bitten him. "No, no, Monsieur," says he, "*tres beaucoup itchy coo*," shrugging his shoulders and scratching himself as he turned his back on the pants. The shrug, the scratch and the gesture was inimitable and done as only French expressiveness can render it.

One of the finest regiments of French's "Contemptible Little Army" was the "Notts and Derbys" (Nottingham and Derbyshire). They covered themselves with glory in the Great Retreat. Several titles have been conferred upon them by popular affection, such as "The Sherwood Foresters," "The Robin Hoods," etc. Coming as they do from the ancient haunts of Robin Hood and his merry band, their regimental crests and badges represent the Archers of Sherwood.

One day, while on the march, we met the Robin Hoods, and as the two regiments passed each other a storm of good-natured chaff flew back and forth, and one of the Robin Hoods, noting by our shoulder badges that we were a cavalry battalion, yelled

in his broad Midland accent, "'Ello, you blokes, wot ha' ye done wi' yer bloody 'osses?" Back came the answer like a flash, "We packed 'em away with your blankety-blank bows and arrows years ago."

## CHAPTER XVII

### STEENVOORDE

**A**FTER a stay of a week at E—— we again got orders to move, eventually arriving in the little town of Steenvoorde. We sported here for a few days at cricket, football, and baseball.

I acquired in this burg a repugnance for restaurant coffee that I have not yet been able to overcome. The sergeants of my platoon were in the habit of consulting together directly after duty at the house of a good old dame who was renowned for her excellent *café au lait*, and the non-coms. seldom missed an opportunity of partaking.

On one occasion when they were there, seeing me pass the window, they hailed me to come in and join them. As I was broke at the time, I hastened to accept the invitation.

“Want a good cup of coffee, son,” said Campbell.

"Thanks, I will."

Campbell pointed to the cup and I drained it down.

"Have another, Shorty," said Britton.

"Don't mind," says I.

"Hop to it, son," and another went the same route.

They could hold themselves no longer and roared with laughter. I was at a loss to understand their mirth, and happening to glance at the old lady, a light broke in upon me. The poor lady had one very bad eye from which tears, copious tears, dripped with sickening regularity, and as she busied herself around the coffee cups, the tears would drop now and again into the cups.

In spite of my disgust, I couldn't help joining in the laugh, although I had an almost ungovernable desire to vomit. The secret of it all was that they themselves had been up against the same dose and they wanted someone else to share with them the burden of the coffee and tears.

Sometimes on the march, should I happen to be



grouchy about anything, Campbell, with his winning smile, would say, "Never mind, son, it won't be long before we'll be back having a good cup of coffee." And then the memory of that treat would dispel my grouch.

One of our boys, McBean, had an instinctive horror of rats; it was a marked fear that he could not overcome. Returning from parade one day, Mc was lying on the straw in the barn, reading a letter, with the thatched roof of the barn directly at the back of his head. His cap was lying beside him and suddenly, a huge rat scuttled past his head. He sprang to his feet with a deafening shout of terror. The rat took refuge in the thatch of the roof. Fixing his bayonet to his rifle, while one of the boys sounded "Charge," Mc lunged ferociously into the thatch. We never imagined he would get the creature, but to our astonishment, at about the third lunge, he drew back the bayonet, with the rat kicking its last kick on the bayonet's point.

Soon after this Mc had a splendid opportunity of demonstrating his ability to stick his needle (as

the bayonet was termed) into the bodies of our German foes and he ably exemplified his skill.

An inspection of the officers and non-commissioned officers by General Smith-Dorrien and a general inspection of the whole division by the general officer ended our stay at Steenvoorde, and one morning we were packed aboard London omnibuses, with the advertisements still upon them asserting the superiority of Pears' Soap to any other soap on the market, and rode for some distance, finally being dumped at a small hamlet where the Royal Welsh Fusileers were resting. These good fellows showed us the greatest hospitality, sharing their rations and making us big draughts of the inevitable, but none the less welcome tea.

Our battalion football team played the Welshmen, winning by the odd goal in three.

With mutual expressions of good will, we parted from the Royal Welsh, resuming our journey on foot.

One of our diversions from the horrors of war here was unique, to say the least. We bought up

every fighting rooster in the neighborhood from the natives and made arrangements to have an exhibition of cockfighting worthy a Roman celebration. We backed B Company's bird to the limit of our resources as our bird was selected by a lad who was an expert on the game and a past-master on all its points. So we felt perfect confidence in his judgment, and our faith was not disappointed.

A proper cockpit was made in an orchard and the reserved seats were in apple trees and brought two francs apiece per man. Every reserved seat in every tree was occupied; there wasn't room for half the patrons. I lost mine before the performance was over through the collapse of the blooming tree and every man on that tree lost the seat that he had bought and paid for, but, owing to my convenient size, I was able to get a good view of the balance of the show seated on Big Bill Skerry's shoulders.

To the huge delight of us all, B Company's bird emerged a dilapidated but triumphant winner from all its contests, coming out with final hon-

ors. In addition to the rooster fight there were several differences of opinion between connoisseurs as to the points involved in the game of cockfighting, which finally resulted in heated fisticuffs and black eyes, and altogether we easily had our two francs' worth.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### YPRES

**A**T last we entered the historic town of Ypres. Our first impression was the flash of bursting shells over a distant corner of the town. At this time Ypres, although showing traces of recent bombardment, was in the main intact and we were very much interested in the fine buildings there. The famous Cloth Hall was in good condition, as was the splendid church; however, some fine stone buildings lay in ruins.

An amusing incident might here be told of the "lack of humor" of the Britisher: Two battalions were passing each other in the dead of night, two companies of one battalion carrying with them wooden crosses to be placed at the heads of the graves of some of the lads who had fallen the day before and who were to be buried at the back of the line. The British Regiment could not see the

Colonials, and vice versa; but an enterprising Cockney determined to identify the regiment. Stealing away from his ranks, he sidled across, like a good soldier, stooping to get a better skyline, and just at that moment a series of bursting flares from up the line lit up the square for a second, but it was long enough for the keen-sighted Tommy to see who the other battalion was and what they were carrying. In a half-whispered, half-hushed shout he turned to his comrades ejaculating, "Well, strike me pink, mates, if those blokes ain't carrying their own bloomin' tombstones."

As we were passing through the square it was almost dark and we were startled to hear a yell from the other side, "We should worry!" It was the Princess Pats. The usual order for comparative silence was given, and we knew we were close to business again.

Searchlights were playing everywhere, artillery roared, and bursts of rapid fire told us we had arrived at the place where "the Allemands are very truculent," as General Smith-Dorrien put it. It

was now the turn of the other companies for fatigue work and they were placed in the village about half a mile from the front ditch. Our platoon took up dugouts under the hedge. So cunningly were these made that a person walking on the other side of the road would hardly see them, even in the daytime. They had been occupied by French troops and, however valiant our Allies are, they are far from being as clean as the British soldiers, and the first thing we did was to go to work to make these dugouts a little less offensive to our nostrils. These holes of ours were only two feet six inches high, just enough room to turn, and when we wished to sleep, the first man was obliged to crawl in and the rest follow on. It reminds me of the family who lived in one room and slept in one bed so closely packed in that when one wanted to turn there was no way of turning unless all the others did.

We made ourselves comfortable as far as circumstances would permit and composed ourselves to sleep.

Morning came and we had a look round. Fritz was exchanging compliments with a battery of French seventy-fives and several shells whistled most uncomfortably through the poplar trees on each side of the road. I, for one, considered the dugouts the best place to observe shell fire. The rest of the boys shared my opinion and we lay till the gunners had retired to *dejeuner* (breakfast).

Then we emerged like human rats and breakfasted on hot bacon, bread and coffee. After washing myself thoroughly in a shell crater, I felt at peace with all the world, even the Germans, and having nothing much to do, Morgan and I took a stroll to see the country. In front of us, on the other side of the road was a row of French graves, and while we were here we kept them in first-class condition. A field of "volunteer" wheat waved in the breeze and a shell of a house surrounded by apple and pear trees in full bloom, stood at the corner. It must have been a lovely place before this conflict of hell swept over it.



## CHAPTER XIX

### BATTLE OF YPRES

**I**T may perhaps seem strange that we should exercise so much care within the precincts of our own lines, but there were two reasons for it: The first one was that the ramifications of the German spy system extended to our own ranks and there was always a possibility that a man in khaki, whom you would take for a fellow soldier and pass with a nod, would put a bullet through your head the moment your back was turned. That element of German espionage, strange and incredible as it may sound, is something with which the military authorities have constantly to contend.

The other reason for exercising extreme care is that many poor people, half demented by the horrors they have witnessed and the indignities and wrongs they have been subjected to, secrete themselves in all kinds of places, and they do not wait

to see *who* approaches, but will shoot or stab at sight. I saw a man from the Worcesters shot dead by a poor demented woman in this condition in Ypres.

Away to our left was the village of L—— absolutely deserted. Being curious, we grabbed our rifles and searched the village. It was a big place, but was shelled out of all shape. We ran upon occasional decomposing bodies of Germans, English, women, dogs and fowl. It gave one the most eerie feeling to see this place. In fancy we could feel the silence that brooded over it. Utter desolation everywhere. The sound of a bit of falling plaster, or the slightest rustle, would send us flying to the nearest cover to wait with rifles ready, like Mr. Micawber, "For something to turn up."

Here Morgan was surprised into letting his affection for me show through. Every fancied danger, and he would instinctively place himself in front of me, and when we flew for cover he unconsciously took up the most exposed position. My chum's solicitude for my well-being has al-

ways seemed, to me at least, unexplainable, yet such was the fact.

We returned from the village, making a detour of a few hundred yards in front of the road. The land around was shelled everywhere, each few yards showing a hole, some big enough to engulf a house. It spoke volumes for the fighting that had taken place in this now historic spot. It was here that the Guards, Lincolns and other famous regiments smashed up the Prussian Guards in the first battle of Ypres. In places there were heads, hands and feet sticking out of the ground. In one old trench laid fully sixty dead Boches half exhumed. Broken rifles, ammunition, equipment, broken machine guns of every kind lay about. It was here that the Canadians were to make their grand debut into the history of the war.

The day was beautiful, the larks singing away as if nothing was wrong with the world, and Morgan, feeling the influence of the day upon him, apparently forgot the war and raised his voice in song — a new phase of his character — and hymns and songs by the dozen poured from his throat.

That night rumors began to circulate that Fritz intended mischief, and the roaring of a trench mortar and burst of rapid fire was the signal for pandemonium to begin. From end to end of the line it was taken up, and we began to think something was really happening. A sergeant came along shouting my name. Finding me he rushed me to the officers; a staff officer was talking and they were deeply absorbed. I immediately learned that the rumors were not unfounded.

I was dispatched to headquarters with a written message. Captain Hopkins gave me my instructions. "I have chosen you because you keep the pace up longer than the rest." This compliment deeply pleased me. "Go to headquarters as quickly as your legs will carry you, report immediately you get there and place yourself under the orders of Sergeant C——."

The words were barely out of his mouth when I was out of the cellar, and down that gloomy road I scudded, a queer mixture of terror and elation — terror because of what might happen to me, and elation in the satisfaction of doing my duty. Hard

as I traveled I was breathing with perfect ease when I arrived at headquarters and reported. I was told to lie down as it might be hours before I would again have a chance to rest. It was impossible to sleep as file after file of bombers and reinforcements piled into the different buildings. I found out that the Germans were expected to attack the French that night on the left of the salient, some hundred yards or so from our position.

The signal, if the Huns attacked the French, was to be three red flares flying up in rapid succession. Our Intelligence Department was not asleep; the attack was expected at three o'clock and promptly on the minute it began. The French held easily and we were not needed.

Next morning I was sent back to my platoon and nothing very exciting happened except the sharp shelling by Fritz of our position until about ten o'clock, when a thing new to our experience came over. The noise was appalling. It was the commencement of the awful bombardment of Ypres.

## CHAPTER XX

### HELL LET LOOSE

**T**HAT night we relieved the Tenth Battalion and took over the front line. Right from the beginning casualties piled up; the shell fire was terrific. In the lulls of the bombardment we dug frantically to consolidate our flimsy defenses. Barbed wire we had none; we simply threw out in front any obstructions we could find.

One amusing incident occurred here; I laugh at it now, although I did not at the time. The little dark man, Libby, was the hero. Libby translated means "Coolness and indifference to danger." A volume could be written of the events in which this man figured that for sheer daring almost surpassed belief. Libby and I were working on a traverse, which, as every one knows, is a cross-section of trench, and we were exerting every effort to fill bags of dirt and pile them up on this cross-section.

Buried underneath our trench were dead men planted as thickly as they could be laid. Digging down I turned up a boot containing a foot. "Stick it in," said Libby.

"Do you think I'm going to touch that thing with my hand?"

"What's the odds," said he, "but if you don't want to, shove it on the shovel with your foot."

I did so and he placed it in the sack, I holding the sack open, and the grisly thing touched my hand in passing. I shuddered, almost fainted, but never a sign of perturbation from Libby. Again he dug, this time bringing up the other foot, with the leg bone still sticking.

"Shove her in," he said.

Sweating with horror, yet fearing his scorn, I again rolled the ghastly thing on the shovel and it was then transferred to the sack. Placing the sack on the corner of the traverse, the little man coolly slapped it out with his spade as if he were handling common dirt. He then called to me for another sack, but I was lying on the parados, sick with horror and vomiting my insides out. So for

the time being he had to continue his ghoulis work alone.

Morning came, finding us still at work and almost dead with fatigue. The bombardment continued without intermission all through that day and afternoon, and our casualties were growing with deadly regularity. At nightfall it died down in our vicinity, but never ceased at our back.

The object of this will be easily seen. They kept hammering the roads and the whole country at the rear of the front line, in order to keep reserves and supplies from getting to us, and they did the job so thoroughly that no two transports could get within miles.

Good old Bill Skerry and a man named Bradley, braved this bombardment on purpose to be with their own battalion when the attack, which we all knew was bound to come, took place.

They told us how the Germans had been using a horrible gas, that the French Algerian troops had evacuated their trenches, that the battalions in reserve at Ypres had been called out and had gallantly come up through that curtain of shell fire,





*From photo by the author.*

THERE ARE LEISURE HOURS EVEN IN THE FRONT  
TRENCH.



*From photo by the author.*

CLEANING-UP TIME



taking up the French trenches and were holding on like limpets, although their losses were terrible.

The glorious charge of the Tenth and Sixteenth had taken place and is now eternal history for Canada. Just think of it, that thin line of men with no artillery to cover them, holding back the mass of the enemy ten times their number.

It now became an anxiety to us to know how they were faring, for if they were obliged to give way we would be entirely cut off. However, it was no use wasting time in idle questioning, so to work we went, frantically making our trenches as strong as possible.

Fritz again got busy with his weeping pill and our eyes were something to remember. The smart was terrible, while the awful odor got in our throats, making them raw and every breath a pain.

Still we worked steadily on, throwing over everything that might prove an obstacle in front of the trenches. Listening patrols were sent out and came back with the news that the Germans were unmistakably massing for an assault.

For myself, so nervous was I that I would have

welcomed an attack to end the suspense. However, we were left in peace till daybreak, which came with a drizzling rain. This made conditions in the trench very bad indeed. But all we could do was to sit tight and wait.

When it was almost light the bombardment started again. It was one roaring, shrieking blast of destruction. Never can I describe the din, the awful rumble of the heavy-weight champions; the magnified thunderclap of their heavy shrapnel; the moaning of the Black Marias; the hiss and scream of their medium-size shells, and the hated whiz bangs, bursting over every section of the trench. And, remember, not a British gun to reply. Hell's gaping craters were open everywhere; now and again a shriek or an oath told that some lad had been stricken down; our parapets were crumbling like matchwood; but all we could do was to wait.

To the sorrow of every one of us, the gallant soul of Bill Skerry took its flight to his Maker about ten o'clock that morning. A small shell ricochetting from a stunted willow tree simply

tore him to pieces, along with a little chap named Wellbelove, which was his family name, and a name he most aptly deserved.

Bill! one of our best beloved mates. We never had time to bury him, but, thank God, he didn't fall alive into the hands of those human devils. A curious effect of the shell burst was to lengthen out his body. When alive and well he was a man of six feet two, and when we examined him after his death, he easily measured seven feet. The sorrow of his little chum, Fitzpatrick, was overwhelming; nothing could comfort him for days.

It was here that I first felt real fear. Terror of course we all have, but that soul-gripping inaction took all manhood away from me as I crouched in the bottom of the trench, trying with might and main to appear unconcerned. I have never experienced quite the same sensation of fear in the front line at any time as I did that night; I felt deadly danger on every hand and my face and head were wet with cold sweat.

In curious contrast to my constitutional dread of the danger abounding on every hand was a man

who happened to have possessed himself of a fairly dried dugout. With that torrent of shell hurtling everywhere, he calmly read chapter after chapter of a magazine, apparently as deeply interested as if he were sitting in his own room at home. How I envied him his nerves—or, rather, the absolute lack of them.

## CHAPTER XXI

### HANGING ON

**A**BOUT fifty yards to the rear of us was a huge pile of bricks, fully a hundred yards long by thirty feet high. The ground we were occupying had originally been a brick yard and these bricks had been put out to dry, but the war coming on they had been left and had gradually settled down into a solid mass.

Someone was rash enough to show himself for a second near the brick pile, and it was his last second. It had become a joke that they would snipe at you with a fifteen-pound shell at Ypres, and the Boches evidently imagined there were men near the brick pile, for they took one shot as a sighter and then turned their heaviest field guns on it. The huge pile looked strong enough to last for a week, yet by night it was a crumbling powder.

This added a very disagreeable fury to the bombardment. The huge shells would burst with a crumbling crash, a great sheet of flame would flicker for an instant, then from out the pall of acrid smoke, flying bricks would hurtle for yards. Dozens of them flew back into our trench and I still bear the marks on my back and hands where flying pieces of brick caught me.

Several men were killed by these curious missiles, while all of us were bleeding from cuts and scratches caused by the wounds.

On went the bombardment and nothing seemed to exist but a riot of noise, flying shrapnel, flashes, and the steady drizzle of the rain. Twice during the day we stood to retire, but each time the major sent word that, "We are holding on and we can hold them 'till the cows come home.'"

Luckily, owing to the heroism of our signalers, the line to headquarters remained intact. These fine boys repaired the line time and again under shell and machine gun fire of the fiercest nature. One fellow earned the V. C. a dozen times during the day; he exposed himself recklessly, working



with all his might in the very heart of the German barrage. He is still living, but was badly hurt later on at Festubert.

Toward evening we managed to get the wounded out and were I to tell the entire story of the self-sacrifice of the boys, it alone would fill a larger volume than this. They were obliged to carry the wounded along an old communication trench about six feet deep, with mud two feet deep at the bottom, then emerge into the shell-swept open for a distance of two or three hundred yards. Curiously enough, very few of the wounded were again hit traveling this road, and "Long" Mitchell, a boy from Michigan, and another boy, Manville, from Prince Albert, walked time and again down that highway of hell with their wounded comrades. Apparently they did not know the sheer heroism of their tasks, and probably don't know to this day.

## CHAPTER XXII

### HERE THEY COME

**S**ERGEANT CAMPBELL, one of the finest soldiers I ever met in my life, called me and asked me to run to the dressing station and tell them there that none of our boys, who had gone down with the wounded, were to attempt to return to the trenches till after dark. Away I started, never expecting to get to my destination, but doing something dispelled my "yellow streak" and I arrived there intact.

What a sight met my eyes! Row after row of brawny Canadian Highlanders lay raving and gasping with the effects of the horrible gas, and those nearing their end were almost as black as coal. It was too awful—and my nerves went snap!

However, a lull came at night, except for the steady fighting on our left, where the Seventh and Eighth were making history, and I managed to get

back all right, and repairing trenches was again the order of the moment.

A fine, handsome Scotch lad, Jim Muirhead, one of my best chums, was working with me repairing a section of trench. At this place we hadn't any sandbags, but simply had to pile up the loose earth in front of us. Deep down in the ground we had made two sloping holes, propping up the top by odd timbers we found lying about. We did this to save ourselves from a big shell Fritz would occasionally lob over in our immediate vicinity. Now Jim is about six feet high and his hole was a big one, mine a small one. We could hear this shell coming and if we moved quickly, we gained the shelter of our holes before it burst. Once, we heard the faint pop in the distance and then a gradually increasing shriek; it was coming—to my excited fancy—straight for our heads. In my panic to escape the crack of doom I hurled myself into Jim's hole, beating him by about the fiftieth of a second.

“Get to hell into your own hole.”

“Go to the devil.”

Our colloquy was barely ended when the shell burst, but this time it was too far off to do any damage. I was thoroughly ashamed of my selfishness, which was due to the first instinct of nature, but good old Jim saw nothing in it but a good joke on himself.

All night long to left and right the scrap went on, just one steady crackle of rifle and machine gun fire, while from every angle they shelled the Seventh Battalion. Their trenches were simply one huge shamble, but they held. Morning came, and still the bombardment raged.

At about three in the afternoon we saw a figure approaching our trenches and by his style we knew it to be our dear old major. On he came in spite of the fire.

By this time Fritz was spraying our parapet top with machine guns and we knew he was at last going to try us. Still, on came the old soldier. He was well over sixty, but a hero's heart belonged to him. Orders had come through from headquarters for the Fifth to retire and all the staff at headquarters had been either killed or

wounded with the exception of the major and Captain Hillion, our adjutant, a soldier from his feet up. These two decided, after vainly trying the field telephone, to give us our orders by word of mouth and they set out on foot.

Captain Hillion was hit before he had gone fifty yards and the old major was left to make it alone. He managed to get within fifty yards of us and then received two bullets in his body. And then the wonder of it—the sheer, dogged spirit of that old warrior! Above everything we heard his yell of pain, yet instead of giving up, he gathered himself together and with a staggering run reached the trench and collapsed. Not till he had delivered his message did he give way and swoon.

Things now were stirring with a vengeance. We knew by the cessation of the shell fire over our trenches that they were coming. I looked through a loophole and my heart seemed to choke in my throat. If it had not been more dangerous to run than to stay where I was, I would have been running yet. To my magnified imagination I never believed the earth held so many people. They

came swarming over their parapet in huge waves, the flash of their bayonets making my spine crawl. Singing, cheering, cursing and shouting, they came on, but we never fired a shot.

“Not till they are near our barbed wire,” was the order.

“Oh, if I could only fire!” I groaned mentally.

On they came with trumpets continually playing their charge. At last the order came. “Fire!” and when I saw them falling in heaps, every drop of blood in my body surged with a desire to kill and I blazed away into the mass of shrieking humanity as fast as my fingers could click the shells in and out of my rifle. I could not miss them if I tried, so thick were they.

We checked them momentarily, but suddenly bullets began to come at us from our rear and we knew they had broken through somewhere and were behind us. The mob in front having quit for awhile, we waited for the next move. The bullets from behind kept us wondering where they had made a gap in our lines.

“Get ready to retire,” came the order, so we

slipped off all but our ammunition and water; few of us had any of the precious liquid left.

Little Hilliard, who was next to me, said, "Well, Bub, we'll have a cigarette anyway before we cash in." "All right," I replied and we rolled a cigarette apiece, thinking we were having our last smoke. We did not know for sure, but guessed that we were surrounded. Our lack of knowledge of our own situation may seem curious, but a modern battle field is on such a vast scale that only in your immediate neighborhood do you know what is happening. In these (for me) dull piping times of peace, when I look back and scan my memory over the individual behavior of my chums, the nerve they displayed surpasses my power of description. As we were lying there smoking what I thought was to be our last fag, I was utterly amazed at the next words of Hilliard:

"Say, Bub, that must be Picric acid that makes our eyes smart so; those shells I bet haven't come more than fourteen hundred yards. Did you see the burst of that last one?" he asked, pointing to the place where a "coal box" had landed. I

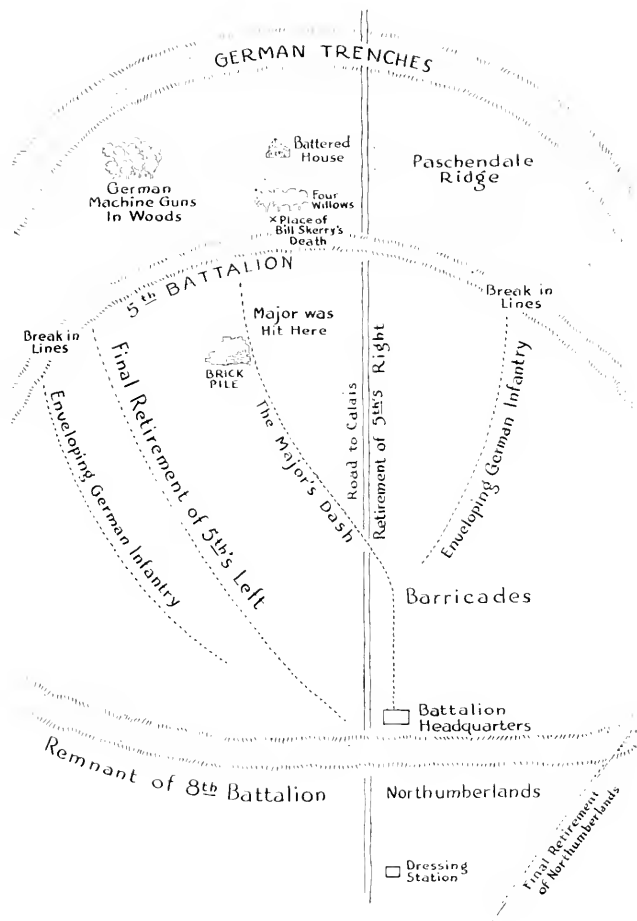
made no reply; I was too frightened to bother my head about what the shells contained. But Hilliard persisted in getting my opinion about the matter and made me think he was far more interested in that detail than in the fact that it was the most probable thing on earth that he would be dead within a few minutes. However, this situation did not seem to worry him at all; he kept on smoking till the end. I am glad to be able to say, that so far as I know, he came through with only the loss of an arm.

As the ground sloped away toward Ypres we could see for some distance down that way and our hearts bounded as two thin lines of men came toward us in skirmishing order.

“Can it be reinforcements?” asked Hilliard.

“It can be nothing else,” said I, and then we witnessed a sight that made us want to cheer with all our might. The coolness of those men was wonderful; steady as a rock they came. They were British regulars, and now you will know why all of us who have been at the front have such an admiration for the British soldier. They





The break on both sides of the Fifth's trenches shows how perilously close they came to being cut off by the enveloping Huns.

[See page 174]



trotted steadily in two long lines for about a hundred yards, then down for a brief rest, then up and on again, all done by the arm signals. Officers dropped on every hand, but others instantly took up their duties and like a finely regulated machine on they came—all done under a murderous fire, but never a flinch. It was a marvel of coolness and iron discipline.

After witnessing that advance of the Northumberland Fusileers and the Cheshires I have ceased to marvel at the Great Retirement of Mons; those wonderful feats of fighting seem to me now to be the entirely natural thing for the British soldier to do.

Suddenly on our left a bedlam of German cheers cleared all doubts of their being through, and the order came for us to retire. Back we went to save ourselves from being flanked. So close a call was it that the last man was only fifty yards from Fritz. Our old major asked our boys to leave him, and of course they refused; but it was by the skin of their teeth they got him out.

Thank God the old major is still living and

back again with his boys. He refused a comfortable staff billet in England on his recovery. "My place is with the boys," he said, and he is with them today. God bless him!

By some marvel we fell back safely till we met the Northumberlands, but how we did it is more than I can tell. One thing I shall always remember. As we filed out of the trench Sergeant Campbell stood in full view of the oncoming Germans till the last sound man was out, quietly seeing to it that we did not get unsteady. After we were all out, with the exception of some of the wounded—alas, some of them had to be left, and I leave the reader to guess their fate—we joined up with the Northumberlands, and as we came past these Tommies they let out a terrific cheer for us. More to us than all the eulogies of generals or newspapers was that cheer from our brother soldiers. And when one remembers that it was given while a hail of bullets was being poured upon them, and they were dropping down, killed and wounded, some idea may be had of the unconquerable spirit of those men and the sporting

blood that courses through their veins. And if you have never known it before, you now know why they are able to “play the game” as the Germans never can.

That cheer was an acknowledgment to the men from Canada for the work we had done.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### FIGHTING FOR OUR LIVES

**W**HEN we joined on with the Fighting Fifth, as the Northumberland boys are so aptly named, I was sent with a message to the O. C. of the Cheshires, but could not get back to my own battalion, so I stayed with the Northumberlands. How can I describe the scene! The riot of noise, the never-ceasing hell-hiss, the scream and roar of shells, everywhere blazing buildings and everywhere writhing or ominously still figures.

Star shells were beginning to flare up as it was almost twilight, the weird green lights glinting on the bayonets of the oncoming Germans. Firmly the Northumberlands waited, quietly and confidently, and then I learned what disciplined courage really is. With wild shouting and trumpeting and a kind of prolonged "Ah-h-h" the mass of

Boche infantry came steadily on. I began to fidget; I preferred the noise Fritz was making to the awful quiet of our own men.

Silently, yet with celerity, little short of marvelous, ammunition boxes were ripped open and bandoliers distributed in a quarter of the time it takes to write it. A burly corporal, noticing my itching to fire, chuckling, said, "Take thy toime, lad." The corporal gave me almost confidence, so cool was he. I felt better and waited for the word. At last, when they were within fifty yards, the order came to "Let go." It was then I understood what rapid fire meant. The way the troops worked their Lee-Enfields made me doubly curse that Ross toy.

The Ross rifle at this stage of the game verified the prophecy of the corporal of the East Lanks. The reader will remember the conversation in the dugout at Armentieres. To my dismay, when I began to fire with rapidity, the cursed bayonet shook itself clear of the rifle. I had fired about six rounds when the bolt refused to work. The rifle was hopelessly jammed, and I tried to ham-

mer the bolt open by placing the butt on the floor of the trench and stamping on the knob of the bolt with my heel. It was hopeless, however, and I hurled "the thing" in the direction of the advancing Germans, with a scream of fury that pierced even that infernal din.

The flimsy magazine-spring of these rifles often fails to work, and, generally, at the most critical moment. As a sniper's rifle, the Ross is everything to be desired; but when fifteen rounds per minute have to be ripped off to make up for a lack of machine guns, the Ross is a miserable failure.

The front of the Germans just crumpled. It was horrible. From yelling it changed to one prolonged wail. Firing like lightning, but with awful effect, the two machine guns pumping into their midst, the boys held them back. So close a shave was it, that a few of them penetrated right on to our parapet. They were bayoneted on the instant. They were fine big men, mostly Prussians and Bavarians, but terrible was the price they paid for their advance.



I thought of our poor fellows writhing in agony from the gas poisoning, and any feelings of pity were easily suppressed. In fact, at the time I fairly exulted in seeing them mown down. Three times that night they launched attacks and at their third attempt succeeded in again forcing us to retire by sheer weight.

Contrary to so many, I consider the Boche a brave man. Their advance at this time proved it. They were literally mowed down at times when attacking; but, still, they came on, scarcely faltering. As an individualist, Fritz is, to a degree, inferior to the poilu or Tommy. The perfection of the Prussian war machine has this flaw—its iron discipline has killed the initiative of its private soldiers. Without their officers they seem to wilt and, in many cases, promptly surrender. At this time, however, Fritzie was flushed with the thrill of pushing us back, and, therefore, full of fight. Any prisoners we took were always ready to inform us that Germany was invincible, and that their release would soon follow.

Do not, dear reader, call the Boche coward be-

cause he surrenders. For you, it is easy to say you would fight to the death rather than be taken prisoner, but consider a man who has endured a week's bombardment — crash! crash! crr-r-r-r-mp! Roaring, blasting, one hideous din, for days; everything being smashed to smithereens; the smoke, the fumes, the stench, and last, but not least, dead and mangled comrades lying around.

Now, think how much fight there would be left in you.

Shell fire will destroy the morale of any soldier, for when a man is fair enough to look facts in the face, he will acknowledge that courage is common to any nation. No nation has a monopoly of it, and the German has his share.

In these days, perhaps, he gives in rather easily; but he is getting hell from the Allied artillery — at least on the Western Front. And, who knows, perhaps doubts of their ultimate triumph have begun to assail them. I have seen them fight well with the bayonet, and a clump on my head from a Hun no bigger than myself I well remember. I hate to admit it, but he licked me honestly and

fairly; and only his sportsmanship saved me. He simply knocked me silly — and passed on. I hate and loathe their barbarity — I hate them for bringing this hell upon the world, but I am English, and as such, must give the other fellow his due.

In my experience with their infamous deeds in Belgium and France, I always remember two occasions when the Huns belied their name. One of them came within range of my own experience. During our retirement one of our men was hit in the leg, and of course fell down. It was impossible to take him with us, for we had to get back quickly in order to make conjunction with the other troops who had fallen back. Much as we hated the idea, we had to leave him. That, unfortunately, is the fate of many of the wounded when retiring. He was taken prisoner and, naturally, we thought he had either been bayoneted, or was on his way to Germany. Judge of our surprise, when in billets, the man walked into our farmyard. We crowded around, simply crazy to hear how he had hoodwinked the Germans and escaped. We marveled when he told his story.

He had been taken by a mob of Saxon troops. He expected either death or capture. These men, however, dressed his wound; inoculated him against the possibility of lockjaw; placed him in a cellar with clean straw to lie on, and when his slight wound permitted him to walk, they allowed him to make his escape to his own lines.

Once, since I have returned, I was told a story by one of the Princess Patricia Regiment. At a certain place in Belgium a dozen or so of the Pats were lying behind some cover. The day was a quiet one, and the Pats had that heavenly concoction called "char" in mind. "Char" is tea to those unacquainted with English. They had the wherewithal for the making of the tea with the exception of the water. Of course there was enough lying around to float a boat, but anyone who has smelt that "aqua vitae" would not dream of using it for tea. When a seasoned soldier will not use it, it is pretty bad.

A little distance from where they were lying was a pump from which good water could be obtained, but covering the pump and the approach

to the pump was a sniper. However, a hot drink is worth risking something for and a man started out to try and bring back some water. Crack! down he went. The man was badly hit but not killed, and his chum determined to try and get him in. He went out, expecting to be hit every second, but nothing happened and he carried his stricken chum in. Now Fritzie has a habit of firing on anything that moves, and the Pats wondered. At last, another man, feeling sure that the sniper had either retired for the day, or had gone to lunch, set forth to fetch the water. Again that ominous crack, and again a prone figure. Again a chum sallies out to at least try and save his stricken comrade, if he is not shot dead. He returns with his chum unhurt. This happened a third time, and then it dawned on the Pats that a soldier who was a gentleman and a sportsman was sniping in the German lines.

So long as the British soldier was on his feet, and an active enemy, the sniper was only too pleased to knock him over, but as soon as the foe was a stricken, wounded man, he was entitled to

everyone's consideration, and for his part he was done with him.

I, for one, hope that that German is back in Germany with a nice cushy wound, and getting the best that the Fatherland can give him.

Hard as we tried, their reinforcements kept piling in, and finally they effected an entrance at one end of our trench, so to keep in touch with our left, we fell back slowly to an old evil-smelling trench, knee deep with the foulest water I have ever seen. If we had had but two batteries of artillery we could have held them, even with their gas. However, to hope to keep them back with infantry alone, against their gas and murderous artillery fire, was something for the Canadians to figure out. As it was, they only succeeded in forcing us back for about a mile.

The whole Canadian Division had been surrounded, but with the timely arrival of the Tommies had fought its way out again. In the early stages of the battle, so close had it been that one battery of artillery had reversed their guns and fired point-blank, at about three hundred yards,

into the mob of Germans. The gunners were all killed or taken prisoners, but the price they made Fritz pay was dear indeed. After this our artillery was obliged to retire for some short distance back, but there the line held.

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## CHAPTER XXIV

### THE BOCHES BALKED

**A**FTER we had rested somewhat in the spot to which we had retired, the corporal, of whom I spoke before, asked for someone to go with him to try and find out what Fritz was up to. I felt I would be all right with him, and I almost preferred instant death to the odor of that foul water-hole, so I went along with him.

To my horror the first thing he did when we got fairly out was to strike a match and light his pipe. Light lightning I jumped from his side.

“My God! Corporal, what are you doing?”

“What’s the excitement?” he asked, puffing calmly.

“You’ll get sniped as sure as fate.”

Then it was he showed the typical fatalism of the soldier.

“Son, if I’m going to get hit, I’ll get it; but if



it's not my turn, I wouldn't get it if I lit a bloom-in' bonfire."

"If you take unnecessary chances you'll get it."

"Don't be afraid, lad, I'm not throwing my life away. You are as safe with me as you would be up in the trench."

We soon ran on to their listening patrol, but my corporal had not been in three campaigns for nothing. He took me, to my excited imagination, almost to their very feet. They were talking like mad and we had evidently been seen a few minutes before, for they rushed to the spot we had occupied just before they got there. We circled about for a few hours and finally decided that Fritz had dug in for the night.

Toward daylight, an order came for all Canadians who had stayed behind to go down to the rear, as the Canadians had been relieved. How tired we all were; I did not care if I lived or died. We ran on isolated bunches of Germans, with some of whom we exchanged a few shots.

At last we emerged on the road, and, to my dying day, I shall never forget the sights that met

our eyes. Everywhere were shell craters, both on the road and on each side of us. In every shrine, where the Belgians placed their crucifixes, men in agony from the gas had crawled and died there; dead bodies, dead horses, wrecked ambulance cars, gun limbers, ammunition limbers, and in one place were six of the very finest horses I have ever seen, with their drivers, dead. Villages, where the people had been living when we went up, were now utterly desolate; everything a smoldering mass of ruins, such had been the fury of that shell fire. And it was still going on, shells screaming over us or bursting close by.

At one place the Boches had pushed so far forward that they were only a short distance from the road and they opened up on us, but only succeeded in wounding a few. Finally we came down to an open space and found the brigade busily cooking breakfast. "Hurrah," thought I, "grub and a sleep." Hastily I began to look around for something to eat, but alas, the order came to be ready to advance again. I was utterly weary, but it couldn't be helped.

Finding my own crowd, who had been fortunate enough to get in a few hours' sleep and were correspondingly cheerful, I fell in, and in skirmishing order we began the advance.

Suddenly at our backs came an ear-splitting report, and of all the music I ever heard that was the sweetest. It was our own heavy artillery replying to the Germans. We skirmished on in long lines until the order came to "Dig in." I was so hungry and tired that I absolutely did not care whether I got hit or not. Happening to notice my condition, Sergeant Campbell came up to me:

"What the hell is wrong with you?" said he.

"Well, if you want to know, Sergeant, I'm hungry, thirsty, and tired out. You people have had an hour or so's rest; I've had none. I'm dead beat and if I get it, so much the better."

I spoke the absolute truth, because that was the one time in my life I honestly wanted to die.

"You get busy and dig in; we need you; not that you're worth much anyway, but you're the only trained runner we've got around."

"Not till I get something to eat," I answered,

deliberately defying him. Again that wonderful understanding spirit of dear old Ken showed forth. Instead of telling me the punishment that would follow my insubordination, he said, "All right, son, I'll see what I can do."

I lay exhausted on the ground and in a few minutes, to my great happiness, the sergeant returned, bringing a dirty old bone, but covered with meat. It was aged, and the flies played upon it, but to my mind and memory no meat ever tasted so sweet. I sunk my teeth in it and the very first bite gave me a new inspiration to live.

Again we advanced, but I clung to my bone, and as soon as we halted to dig in again, I buried my face up to the ears in the meat. As soon as I was full I carefully slipped the bone in my belt in order to be prepared for the next hunger-pinch. I then felt a very earnest desire to live, and when the next halt came and the shells were coming over in a never-ending stream, I had an intense desire to explore the bowels of the earth. On feeling for my entrenching tool, to my dismay, I found it gone. Grabbing my bayonet from the

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scabbard I went to work, and the way I burrowed with my hands on that bayonet was a caution. I would not have taken a back seat to a prairie badger.

## CHAPTER XXV

### FUN AND FURY

WE lay here for awhile, every now and then some poor boy going over, although we were fairly safe from shrapnel if we closely hugged our holes. But we had no protection whatever from their high explosive shells; these hit the ground, tearing huge holes, and woe to those who were near. The shell fire was terrific, but our own guns were roaring back magnificently.

To show how men will rise to the height of dare-devil coolness, I must tell of the men who were supplying our guns with ammunition. Six horses on a limber, with three drivers, and two carriers on the limbers, would trot steadily to the bomb-proof shelter where the ammunition was kept, load up, and still at the steady trot return to the guns. All the time heavy shrapnel was bursting overhead, and the awful crack of this

shell is enough to break the strongest nerve. A huge shell burst right overhead, a few yards in front of us, killing some of the gun crew, but without a falter, except to remove their dead comrades, the rest went on steadily working their guns.

Again we moved forward, and so furious had become the artillery duel, that we could only advance in small parties. A chum of ours died here. We were lying down for a time behind a hedge and one of the heavy shrapnel shells burst a little to the front of us, the forward sweep of the shrapnel landing the bullets right among us. When a shrapnel shell bursts the bullets sweep forward and obliquely to the ground, having a forward range of three hundred yards and a lateral zone of fifty yards. The three hundred odd bullets of the German shell fly like a fan. It will be seen that a shell may burst right over your head without injuring anyone, but the men three hundred yards or so to your rear are hit.

The report of the explosion stunned us for a few seconds, and this chum of ours, as soon as we began to feel that we were still alive, got to his feet

and said, "Boys, I'm hit." "Where?" we asked. "Through the head, I think," said poor Dick, and then dropped dead. On examining his body we found that a ball had passed right through his heart.

It was now that the British troops again began to deploy over the plains toward the trenches. Line after line, for hour after hour, they pressed steadily on. It was a sight, I can tell you, a lesson in steadiness and coolness. Again we dug in and were ordered to stay and be ready to support the attack the British were making. However, we were not needed and we stayed in our self-made holes for four days under that hail of shells. The casualties were very heavy and our own little band was soon minus some well-known faces.

One amusing, yet, in a way, tragic thing happened here. This plain of which I am speaking was not unlike the prairie. All hedges were gone except a few here and there. It was mostly grass land and apparently there had been a crop taken off there the autumn before. Scattered over this place were farmhouses, which of course were in



ruins, but a bunch of cows had by some means managed to keep alive here, and this same herd were quietly grazing away, while men all around them were burrowing in the ground for their lives. It was most amusing to see a cow calmly lying down and chewing away. Poor creatures, they did not last long. How they managed to live any time was marvelous, considering what was flying around them.

Next night, to our great joy, a tea ration was brought up, but our hopes were dashed to the ground by the O. C's. forbidding any fires to be lighted. Of course, there were blazing stacks and buildings everywhere, but not in our vicinity. Water was plentiful enough, but we were obliged to go some distance for drinkable water. Here we were, with tea, sugar and water, yet unable to make a dixie of tea, and it must be remembered that we had had neither hot food nor a hot drink for twelve days.

Fritz, however, very obligingly solved our difficulty. We were lying close to a thatched barn, which, by another of those miraculous, unexplain-

able things, had not yet been shelled. However, Fritzie must have known our trouble, for bang! bang! and a couple of "hissing Jennies" hit the barn plump, and in an instant that barn was ablaze. It soon burned to the ground and, utterly reckless of shell fire or machine guns, we crowded round the hot embers and brewed our tea. The officers raged at us for a bunch of suicidal fools, as exposing ourselves with a light background was liable to draw half of the Boche artillery on us. The Old Man himself saw us crowding round the embers—a splendid mark on the top of that hill. Over he rushed, his face fairly blazing with rage. "Get into your holes, you suicidal fools," he roared. But, colonel as he was, some one told him where he might go. We all feared for the result of this remark, as it was no less than deliberate insubordination punishable with a very heavy penalty. If it had been a German private soldier who had answered his commanding officer in such fashion, he would not have had time to say his prayers.

But I suppose the Colonel had a heart some-

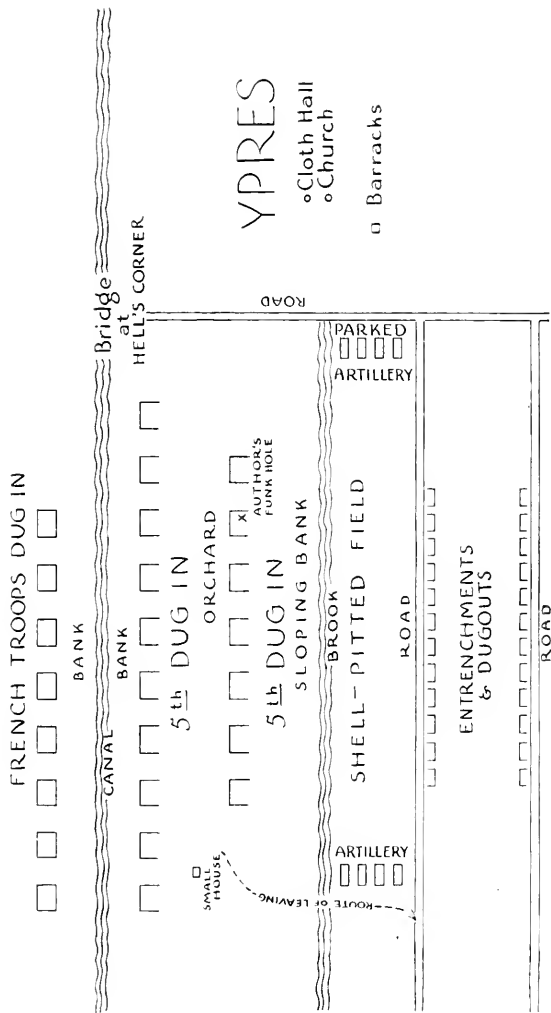
where under his belt and he passed it up. It probably brought home to him what his men had been through. So we got our tea, "and of all the drinks I've drunk" my gratitude to Fritz far exceeded Kipling's Tommy to Gunga Din.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### YSER

WHEN relieved from this hillside we once more marched through Ypres, had two days' rest in the adjoining fields, and were then sent to guard the Yser Canal.

Our flanks touched the very city itself and during the day we could see houses falling and the city being systematically pounded to dust. I shall never forget the day that Fritz turned his attention to the canal bank. Most of the battalion were in dugouts they had made themselves, just on the sloping side of an orchard; the orchard was the top of a bank; on one side was the Yser River and on the other side was a brook. It will be seen that we were dug in between two streams, with the brook flowing about forty feet below us, and we stationed on the side of the bank in our holes about three quarters of the way up from the bottom.



The Fifth are dug in on what was a beautiful orchard and garden, 60 feet above the French, enabling them to sweep the French front with cross-fire. The German lines completely enveloped this salient. The bridge (Hell's Corner) was an important transportation factor, hence Fritz's constant attention and its nickname.



Huge shells began to burst with deafening noise in the field on the other side of the brook, while a few dropped right in among us, causing many casualties, and such was the fury of the bombardment that the ground rolled and heaved as though being shaken with a quake.

Trembling with terror I hugged the bottom of my dugout, expecting every moment to be either buried or thrown up in the air. However, it was not to be. But, suddenly, the ground beneath me began to slide, and for what seemed an age I felt myself riding on the top of a solid mass of earth. What had happened was this, the whole bank had slid away in the direction of the brook, and, incredible as it may seem, the brook afterwards flowed some twenty yards farther away than it had done previously.

Still nothing could depress for long the spirit of the Fifth and soon the boys were taking note of their surroundings. Presently a bunch of French soldiers passed along by us with two huge panniers loaded with bottles full of the best vintage in the neighborhood; they had gotten them

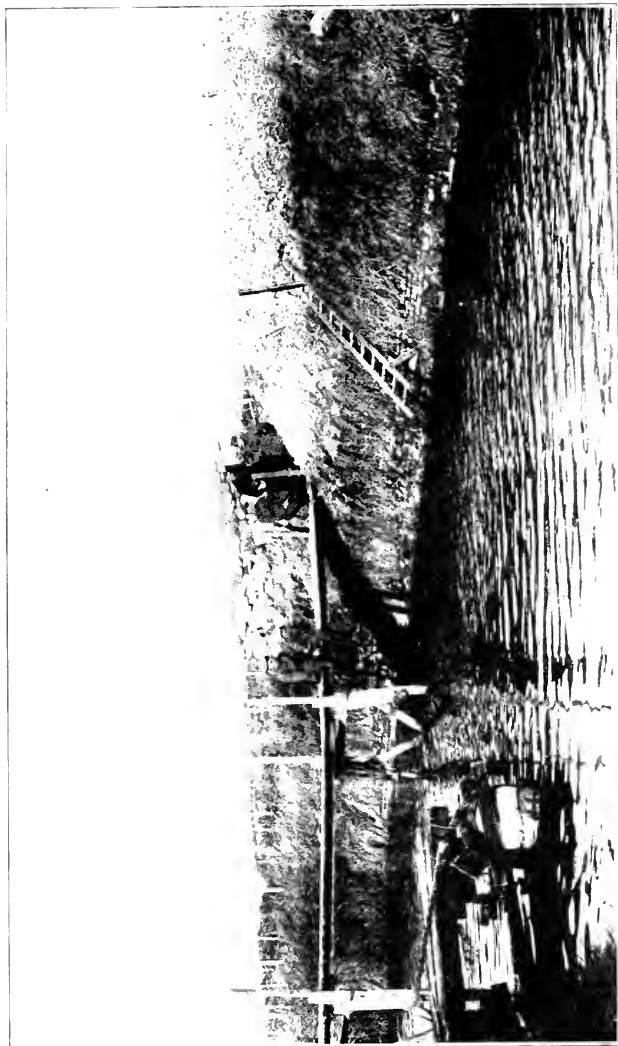
in the city. Instantly the boys pricked up their ears and longing glances were cast toward the stricken town. In a short time the more adventurous spirits had found their way into the city and returned laden with all kinds of good food and the same refreshing liquid that the Frenchies carried.

Libby, who was ever a leader in any reckless enterprise, accompanied by Fitzpatrick, made their way into Ypres and came back with stores of good things to eat and drink and bursting stories of the quantity of stuff lying around. "If we only had a motor truck we could have filled it," they said.

Next day I went with a party. It was no small feat to get away from the battalion without being noticed, but we managed it and Libby led the way to the barracks occupied formerly by the Belgians, and used during the winter of 1914-15 as headquarters for the British divisions who were holding the salient.

A Belgian sentry at the battered gates allowed us to go in and we mounted the stairs of the bar-





*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

### THE YSER CANAL.

The barbed wire entanglements mark the first-line German trenches. The men in the picture are German officers.



racks, entering a long room that apparently had been the sleeping quarters of the Belgian soldiers, for pegs and numbers and framework of cots were hanging on the wall. But what interested us most was a number of brand-new Lee-Enfield rifles packed away in boxes; we possessed ourselves with one each. Then we turned our attention to the clothing left by the quartermasters of the British Army. We quickly selected underwear, a good jackknife each, and anything else to which we took a fancy. The underwear was of the very finest quality, being sent out by the ladies in England to the young subalterns. Canned fruit, rations of tea, chocolate—everything heart could desire was there in abundance. Our chief trouble was in determining what to select and what to leave.

When we sallied out the difficulty was to dodge the pickets who had been placed in the town to prevent looting. Now we had been unquestionably looting, but it was excusable in that we took nothing that belonged to the civil population; still it properly came under the head of looting

and the pickets would have shot us on sight had they caught us with our spoils. Therefore, it was one thing to get it, but quite another thing to transport it in safety to our dugout.

We separated into twos, Libby and Fitzpatrick with the rifles taking one route, and a boy named Powell and myself with the rest of the loot, taking another. All went well with us until we ran into the arms of a Tommy, alas, one of the pickets. He was a typical John Bull and he was there to prevent just such things as we had been doing. We tried bluff —

“Good-day, chum.”

“What are you doing without your arms in here?” he asked.

Here was a poser, for to be without arms in the danger zone is a terrible crime. Powell tried to rise to the occasion by explaining that we had been sent with messages and had not far to go.

“What have you got in those valises?”

Our hearts sank into our boots. Our answer did not satisfy him in the least. Still holding his rifle at the “ready” —

“Right-about face! an’ don’t try any bloomin’ funny business or yer dead. Quick march.”

My heart sank into my boots and I gave up in despair, for escape seemed impossible. And then followed as fine a bit of team work as I have ever witnessed in my life. The Tommy not only had his bayonet fixed, but in his rifle we knew there were at least five rounds of live ammunition. But the thought of quietly giving up had not entered Powell’s head. Just as we were passing a huge crater hole, he stumbled over and fell right at our captor’s feet and frantically grabbed them. My own wits, I am glad to say, acted like lightning and I grabbed him round the neck and he toppled over. Quicker than it takes to tell, we rolled him to the edge of the crater hole and gave him a vigorous, though not too violent a push over, and down he rolled to the bottom. I can still see the smoke of his ascending remarks.

Then we ran for dear life. Luck was with us and we landed safely in our dugouts, loot and all. We hurriedly unstrapped our valises from our shoulders and disposed of our stuff in a concealed

hole, because we were afraid, knowing the character of the British soldier, that he would find out where we belonged.

And sure enough, before long, he heaves on the horizon. Now was exemplified the old saw, "Money talks." Before he could reach the headquarters' dugout, Powell darted across and intercepted him. I followed.

"Say, chum," said Powell in broken-hearted tones, "you ain't going to split on us, are you?"

"Horders is horders, an' you blokes played me a damned nasty trick."

"Have you any money, chum?" asked Powell.

"No."

Powell took a five-franc bill out of his pocket and I followed suit. Lucky we were to have it as we were generally as destitute as he. Ten francs is wealth untold to a soldier on the Western Front. While Tommy's eyes glinted, he hesitated.

"Come on, chum," says I, "you know you would have done the same if you had been up the line like we have for the last fifteen days or so,

and wanted some good grub and a change of clothes."

"But how am I to know that nobody saw me with you two blokes?"

"Nobody saw us," Powell hastily assured him.

"Well, besides, you bunged me into that 'ole, an' yer were none too gentle over it neither."

Desperate and thinking the game was about up, I ventured,

"Don't you think that was a pretty neat trick, partner, all the same?"

The humor of it all came to our rescue, for a slow smile spread over his English mug.

"P'raps yer right," says he; "give me yer ten francs an' we'll call it square. But, remember, if I gets 'auled hover the coals, I'll 'ave to come for yer then."

He left with the last of our money, but leaving us a huge pile of comfort, and we heard nothing more of the matter.

One afternoon I sat reading a book and happening to glance up I beheld a strange sight. Walking, or I should say limping between two

stalwart French infantrymen was a cripple. His left arm was doubled up at the elbow; later on I discovered it was withered. One leg was fully six inches shorter than the other and, to my astonishment, the Frenchmen were treating him none too kindly. They were not abusing him, as the natural courtesy of every Frenchman will not permit him to be impolite even to the hated Boches, but I could see that they would have dearly loved to have thrown their crippled prisoner down the steep banks of the canal. Being a runner, I was more or less privileged and my curiosity being aroused I determined to follow the party. They stopped at the headquarters' dugout and pushed their prisoner in. Walworth, in the absence of an interpreter, always officiated when difficulties of language cropped out. He was sent for. I listened to the Frenchmen's story. It appears these Frenchmen noticed, when coming down the main street of Ypres, that one of the houses showed very little signs of hard usage. After such a bombardment, this struck them as being suspicious, and knowing the cunning of the Hun only too



well, they determined to search the house. Nothing did they find, but they were still dissatisfied. Quite by accident they hit on a door leading to a cellar underneath the house. Installed in this cellar was a complete telephone system, and our cripple and another man were operating it. The cripple's accomplice was promptly bayoneted by the irate Frenchmen, but they decided to take the other man along to the nearest headquarters, which happened to be ours. Whether or not these men were spies I cannot tell, but the evidence would point that way. Suffice it to say that the cripple was sent away to brigade headquarters and I am absolutely in the dark as to his ultimate fortune.

It was not only my immediate chums who were refitting themselves and feeding themselves in the "hospitable" city of Ypres; every soldier who could do so partook of its bounty.

Many and varied were the souvenirs that the boys brought back with them. To their credit be it said that they never took a thing that had belonged to any of the inhabitants, but the army

was a different and legitimate prey. There was one exception, however, and a bunch of Number Seven Platoon were the proud purloiners of a brand-new gramophone. They had consumed a little wine and were correspondingly gay. Now, my Holy Rollers I suppose we shall have you holding up your hands in horror at those awful soldiers. Don't worry your precious souls; those boys were not allowed to get drunk. If they did disobey orders, we did our best to shield them and take over their duties until they were themselves again. It was very rare that they ever transgressed in this regard.

Soon the gramophone was playing merrily away and we poured from our holes like so many rabbits to listen. Oh, the power of music! War may seem romantic in a certain sense to those at a distance, but to those actually engaged in it, it is a sordid monotonous business. Home, parents and loved ones were brought nearer to us than before and memories of an existence that seemed to have passed and gone from us long ago filled my very being.

Under the influence of the music the boys evidently forgot there was a war, for one by one we crept from our dugouts and gathered around the charm box. Fritz, however, had not forgotten about the war at all and he soon reminded us that we were there for more serious business than day-dreaming under the influence of a gramophone. A salvo of five whiz bangs readily brought us down to earth and into earth we scuttled like a bunch of human ground hogs; I think I made the twenty-yard space to my hole in one leap; at least it seemed like a single jump. No one was hit, but we hugged our holes knowing that the dose would be repeated.

I couldn't help but laugh when I heard the voice of one of the boys raised in anger to his chum. "Didn't you bring in the gramophone?" "Do you think I was going to wait for that?" replied the chum. "Well, we wouldn't miss you," was the rejoinder, "but if that music box gets smashed, what shall we do?"

The awful possibility of such a contingency must have instantly aroused the negligent one to

a sense of the impending danger, for darting from his hole he recovered the precious instrument and made a return trip for the records.

For the few days that we were sunken in those miserable holes, which were the merest apologies for dugouts on the canal, we lightened the tedium of the many hours of weary waiting by the magic of that wonderful box.

The initiative of our mob was never better shown than in the following amusing happening. At night those of us who were not engaged in fatigues were told off to patrol the canal banks. Day and night a never-ending stream of French soldiers would pour from the city carrying with them loads of wine, etc. Walworth, who spoke French like a native and who was the possessor of a commanding physique and air, would temporarily, at the wish of his comrades, take charge of the patrol, and they would halt a party of these Frenchmen and tell them that they had orders to confiscate all loot, and, deeply as they regretted it, they must disgorge their wine, together with the *et ceteras* they had. An argu-

ment would follow and the Frenchmen would protest. Then Walworth, with an air of condescension, and a warning to the Frenchmen to say nothing about this breach of duty, would agree to a division of the spoils. Through this handy medium we were saved the trouble of going after it ourselves. Arriving at our dugouts in the morning we would find a bottle or two of very excellent wine which had been thrown into our holes by the Frenchies, and this wine heated made a very acceptable drink in the chill hours of the morning.

Another evidence of my "yellow streak" took place one day when we went for a bath in the canal. Every man who knew me and who is alive today laughs every time the incident is mentioned. My chums had all left the water, but I decided to swim the canal once more. Just then a shell landed plumb in the water, most uncomfortably close. The sensation I experienced was peculiar, to put it mildly. I spun round and round, after the fashion of a top, and fancied that I had swallowed half the water of the canal.

Struggling in a sort of frightened frenzy to the shore, and without waiting to put on my clothes, I dashed like a flash of lightning up the canal bank into the orchard and hurled myself into my hole, where I sat blubbering and sobbing like a scared child.

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE FUN OF IT

ONE incident, although nearly tragic, makes me laugh when I think of it. In our platoon we had a very peculiar character; he was (as most of us were) an Englishman, but I strongly suspect he had a big splash of Gypsy blood in his veins. In spite of all orders to the contrary, this boy would wander away and be gone for hours, and would return laden with all kinds of souvenirs—helmets, bayonets, bottles—almost every conceivable thing, and one day he came in with a woman's full rig-out of clothes. Another day he was missing and came back at dusk with a string of six beautiful fresh fish. Two of us accidentally fell on the place where these fish abounded; it was a kind of fish preserve, after the fashion of the fish ponds around old mansions in England, but this fellow, I believe, found them

by instinct. The boys who knew him would have wagered their shirts or their last nickels that if he was asked he would fetch Von Kluck's sword from out of the German lines in broad daylight. Of course around Ypres he was in the seventh heaven and at the back of his dugout such a bewildering mass of junk was never collected by living man. Old clocks, pieces of shrapnel, sabots, wine bottles, needles and a host of other things, including all kinds of clothing. Of course he could not take them with him, but he was to my idea a kind of left-handed kleptomaniac.

He was very busy ferreting along the canal banks and in the orchard one afternoon, when Fritz sent over five whiz bangs in rapid succession. With a yell he clapped his hand to that part of his anatomy where a kick is usually administered, staggered a few paces and fell. The apple tree above my head was cut to pieces, but when the banging commenced I lost no time investigating the innermost corner of my dugout and escaped unhurt; greased lightning was a slow freight to the way I dived for safer regions.



After waiting a few seconds to let the splinters settle, I looked for Gypsy. He was severely wounded, but not of a too serious nature, and in spite of his being so badly hurt, I could not help saying, "Tahn, son, that got you right in the proper place."

The story went up and down the line many times afterwards, because it seemed so funny for a man who was always poking his nose in forbidden places, that he should get hit just where a boy would, who had been stealing apples.

Tahn and I had a good laugh afterwards at the convalescent camp over the incident, although he said that at the time he couldn't see my side of the joke at all.

The ignorance of some of the native peasantry of this part of France concerning Canada was comically exemplified. The officer went to the house of an old lady for the purpose of finding out how many men she could take care of, and she asked him, "What kind of men are you going to put in my barn?"

"Canadians, madam," he replied.

"Oh, no, Monsieur, I will not have any more black men here."

The officer hastened to assure her that our skin was as white as hers and the native courtesy of the old French lady was trebled to make amends for her mistake.

This same officer was keenly desirous of showing his knowledge of French, which was at its best quite limited, and he would converse always in that language with the French soldiers or people with whom he came in contact. He inquired at an *estaminet* in his best French for some red pepper, and the good housewife, who happened to speak only patois handed him a nicely folded little paper package of cootie, or lice killer. Of course he had to endure a laugh. But his enthusiasm for displaying French was most marked when I heard him at the close of a short talk with a French soldier, who happened to be equally desirous of displaying his knowledge of English. When they were parting, our quartermaster shook his hand and said, "Oh, reservoir."

"Tanks," replied Frenchy.

## CHAPTER XXVIII

### LEAVING YSER

**B**EFORE we left the canal we had a really miraculous escape—I and the other members of my platoon. We were detailed on ration party and while waiting for our loads we straggled up the road, the boys being only a few yards apart from one another. Suddenly we heard the ever-increasing roar of a huge howitzer shell coming straight at us. Throwing ourselves flat we waited for what seemed an hour, although in reality only a second, and with a shrieking roar, like the crack of doom, it landed in our midst. I remember going up, but I never remembered coming down. When I came to my senses some sixteen hours later I was told what happened after the arrival of the German souvenir. Not one of our boys had been killed, nor even wounded, although several were sent home suffering from shell-shock,

and very bad cases too. We had all been stunned and consequently put out of action for that night.

A second ration party took our place and the same thing was repeated, but this time with terrible results; forty-eight of our boys became casualties—killed, wounded or shocked.

The wonder is that any of us stayed on duty at all, and in my particular case the result was to make me a mass of irritated nerves, while my hands and limbs twitched for days. I believe if the M. O. had seen me I would have been sent for at least a week's rest, but I stayed it out.

It was midnight and as hot as Hades when we started from the banks of the Yser. Now we had been some twenty-two days constantly in action. I have not spoken of the numberless times we stood to, to be launched into the line to help our terribly hard-pressed French and British comrades. Every time a tornado of German artillery fire would open up, we would stand ready to advance across open ground to the front line. Also, in spite of our fun on the Yser's banks, we were often subjected to terrific bombardments from the Boche

heavies. In short, our casualties on the Yser were fearfully many.

Judge then of our condition for a twenty-five mile march. The beginning of our march commenced by doubling us out between batteries of roaring seventy-fives and sixty-pounders. The awful din was the finishing touch and our nerves went snap. At last we were clear and we settled down to a steady hike. The Warwickshire Regiment, which took our place on the banks of the canal, was there about twenty minutes when a fearful bombardment burst upon it. Poor gallant Midland lads; God rest you where you lie! Next morning a few survivors still hung to their positions, but, alas, the gallant Warwicks were almost decimated.

Who was it first published the scurrilous lie that the British sacrifice their Colonial troops and save their own? No fouler slur on those quiet tenacious warriors of the Old Land was ever cast. If Tommy Atkins fails in taking or holding a position, no other nation on God's earth can take it or hold it.

On, on, we tramped! God! Would we never halt? One after the other, exhausted men would fall and sleep, sleep, sleep. On and ever on till legs moved mechanically, all sensation of movement having left them. Men dozed as they walked, fell as they dozed, lay where they fell.

True to my mighty vow that I would never fall out on a march, I lurched on, but, God! the effort. At last, as day was breaking, they took us into a field, and a hot drink of tea, some food and a rest of one hour revived us somewhat.

I noticed that one of the officers was carrying a puppy in his arms. It was only a few days old and I marveled at his wonderful heart in forgetting his own troubles and caring for the poor little helpless creature. Our curiosity was aroused and we asked him, "Why the pup?"

"Boys," said he, "that pup is worth a fortune. It was born at the time of the very heat of the bombardment." I never knew what eventually became of the poor little creature.

On again, all through the blazing heat of the day we hiked. Tommies would walk with us,

easing our lot in their rough, kindly manner. They promised us Fritz should pay dearly for his dastardly gas attack before they were through. On, on, till we entered Bailleul. Thank God! Rest, we thought. But no, ever on.

And then the men, the limit of endurance reached and mad with disappointment, began to get in an ugly mood. Discipline was sorely strained, and we openly shouted our opinion of the officers to their faces.

And then we witnessed a thing which brings tears to my eyes every time I think of it. Those officers of ours—alas, some of them were not there; they sleep near Bill Skerry and the rest—were in no better shape than ourselves; in fact, owing to their responsibility, they were in worse plight. Instead of marking down the offenders for future punishment, they inflicted worse punishment on us by making us thoroughly ashamed of ourselves. Lining up across the road, they bade us halt for a space, telling us that they had a bet to decide, and it must be decided at once. They were going to run a race. Their effort was

pitiful in the extreme. They started out bravely enough, but a few paces, and one after the other would stagger and fall; but they struggled to their feet and staggered away again. After such an exhibition of courage what could we do or say. Not only was it a lesson to us, but it is one of the grandest memories I have. To a civilian, perhaps, there does not seem a great deal in it, but it was a sight we soldiers never can forget. There were those battle-weary men, utterly worn out, their nerves on edge, scarcely able to walk, yet to encourage their men, and show them that they were game to the end, they went through the threefold agony of that race. Such an example of pluck, resourcefulness, knowledge of men, and chivalry, I shall never witness again.

All things must have an end, be they good or bad, and at last, what remained of us, stumbled into the yard of the big farmhouse owned by the lady who objected to the black soldiers of Canada. The sun was just setting when we were finally dismissed. Some of the boys never moved from the spot where they stood before they were dis-



missed. They simply sank down and slept! slept! slept! For myself I managed to climb to the second floor of a barn, and seeing some deep straw in one corner made for it. I had my fingers on the buckle of my belt, and when I awoke twenty-four hours later my fingers were still clutching the slide-buckle. When I had fallen down I had turned my head, and while I slept on my stomach, my head was turned sideways. On awakening I could not turn my head in its proper position, and for some hours, to the amusement of the boys, I was walking about with my chin resting on my left shoulder. A vigorous massaging at last gave me relief. Then taking off my clothes I bathed in a dyke, and, such was my physical training, I was on duty at headquarters next day.

A broiling hot day, and Libby, perspiring profusely, hailed me as I thoughtfully watched the progress of a hen to her laying place. We were not supposed to steal anything, but a hungry man is not over-scrupulous and that hen interested me. The little dark man, with his whimsical manly face, was the most cheery comrade I ever had.

"Coming for a bath, Bobbie?" "Lord! I haven't energy enough to smoke."

"Aw, come on."

"All right," said I, and away we started, singing at the top of our voices, and made our way to a huge sheet of water we could see in the distance. At last we arrived at its shores only to find that its greatest depth was about six inches. For the first time since I knew him I found that Libby sometimes did read his Bible. Gazing at the fraud with an air of resigned disgust he said thoughtfully, "Well, Bobbie, Simon Peter would not need a hell of a lot of faith to take a stroll on the waves of that blankety-blank lake."

We determined to bathe somewhere. There were lots of dykes, but they were either too shallow, too dirty, or too muddy to be swimable. Hailing a farmer, we inquired of him where we could find a dyke deep enough to swim in. Luckily he understood my execrable lingua franca, and he led the way to a corner of one of his fields; here a dyke had widened out to about thirty feet. The water, so said the farmer, was about ten feet

deep. We did not doubt him, but the color scheme of the water was something even our seasoned tastes did not fancy.

Libby looked at the water, then at me, then at the farmer. "Hell!" said he, "I came out to have a swim and here goes."

Taking off his few clothes he dived straight into the green mess. He emerged, swam around for a minute, then climbed the bank. I howled with laughter. Libby, like Esau, was a very hairy man, and the green spawn clung to his hairy hide in long streamers, while from his head hung long green veils almost to his heels.

"Oh, look at the bride," came a voice over my shoulder, and a small party of our immediate crowd came up.

"Isn't she perfectly sweet?"

"Yes, but isn't it a pity she's bow-legged!"

"Congratulations." This to me. "You are some money saver, Bub, all you have to do when she wants a new dress is to pitch her into the bridal vat."

"Oh, come to me sticky embrace," said Batch.

“Sure,” ejaculates Lib, and straightway leaps at Batch, encircling him lovingly with his spawn-covered arms. The party scattered to right and left, for they feared that the fickle bride would shortly transfer “her” affections to any one of them. Lib, with a yell of satisfaction, relinquished his hold on Batch, scurried to a shallow but clean patch of water farther down the dyke, and was soon rid of his nuptial garments. I had to be satisfied with a wash in the same place.

And now, great joy and satisfaction came to cheer the hearts of the Fifth. The Colonel was seen to sneak guiltily from the farmhouse. Stealing away to a spot, where he fondly imagined he was unobserved, he sat down and divested himself of his upper garments. Then with a furious wrench he tore off his shirt and, to the observers’ unholy joy, he commenced to scratch! scratch! scratch! Having gone well over his bare hide, he turned his attention to his shirt. What joy! The Old Man was lousy.

Speaking of our clinging friends, the lice, it may be of interest to discuss the various methods

of taking the offensive, when they have massed for an attack under your shirt. The old method of hunting, according to Morgan, was not really hunting, but strategy.

“Well, my black-whiskered evil genius,” said I, “what is your wonderful system of beating them to it?”

“My poor, innocent child,” said he, “I suppose I must pity your benighted ignorance and explain. You take off your shirt, pinch a quantity of salt well over it, lay it down flat on the ground; then get a pail of water and place it a few feet away. The stock will fall for the salt and will eat it. Naturally, they get thirsty, and then beat it for the pail. Now is your chance, grab your shirt and run.”

“Chatting” was the professional term for hunting on the Western Front. It is simply searching for your gray-back foes, and dispatching them by the medium of one’s nails. Another method, practiced by highly trained experts, is to take a lighted candle and run it up and down the seams of your clothes. None but the very expert can do

this as it often results in burning holes in your clothes.

Church parade took place the Sunday before we left for further work with the Huns. The General was to look us over. It was a lovely morning when we lined up in the field awaiting our leader. The scene will live in my memory as long as I exist. Very few traces of war could be seen here. The field was carpeted with a thick growth of beautiful green grass, while the spring flowers were perfect in their beauty and fragrance. Tall poplars fringed three sides of the field, and the breeze bent them gracefully this way and that. The soft, sighing sound of this gentle wind, playing through the poplars, seemed to be a sweet requiem for the very gallant gentlemen of England and Canada who would parade with us no more.

And the men. God! the wonder and pathos of it. To see them standing easy, chatting and joking one with the other, one would have thought war was non-existent. But take a closer look. See those faded, patched uniforms, mud-stained

and blood-stained, yet spotless as far as human effort could make them. And the look in their eyes; the look! that far-away, dreamy pathetic stare of men who have looked straight into the mouth of hell

A strange contrast they made to the newly arrived reinforcements from England. The latter, with their clean uniforms and their fresh faces, looked very boyish and young against the boys who had been through the jaws of death at Ypres.

All familiar with the history of Canada's part in the great conflict, know the speech delivered to us by the General, and his words of confidence and advice for the future. His splendid talk inspired all of us with renewed faith in our fight.

After a reorganization, we soon were ready to interview the Fritzlers again, and before long we were engaged in another scrap that in some respects surpassed even Ypres for its proportion of casualties on a narrow front.

Our work this time was to take over a section of the line that was in imminent danger of being

broken; few people in these later days ever dream of the nearness of the Allies to absolute defeat in the first months of the war.

Now I have something to tell those people, who are forever lauding the deeds of Britain's Allies, and forever forgetting that Tommy Atkins, the British soldier, does a little fighting, too.

We hear of the tragedy of Belgium, and God forgive any man who fails to honor that noble little nation; we hear of the soul of France, the Anzacs, the Canadians, but very little is said of the men who quietly, without fuss or advertisement, lay down their lives in this great conflict, the Tommies of Great Britain —

“For he does not advertise, but he wins the day or dies.”

People who have never felt the breath of war, chat glibly of the nations engaged in the conflict. “Where are the British?” they ask. I'll answer them in a few words. The business of the British soldier is to down Fritz, and he is doing it so well that the newspaper men naturally have grown to expect great things from him, and consequently

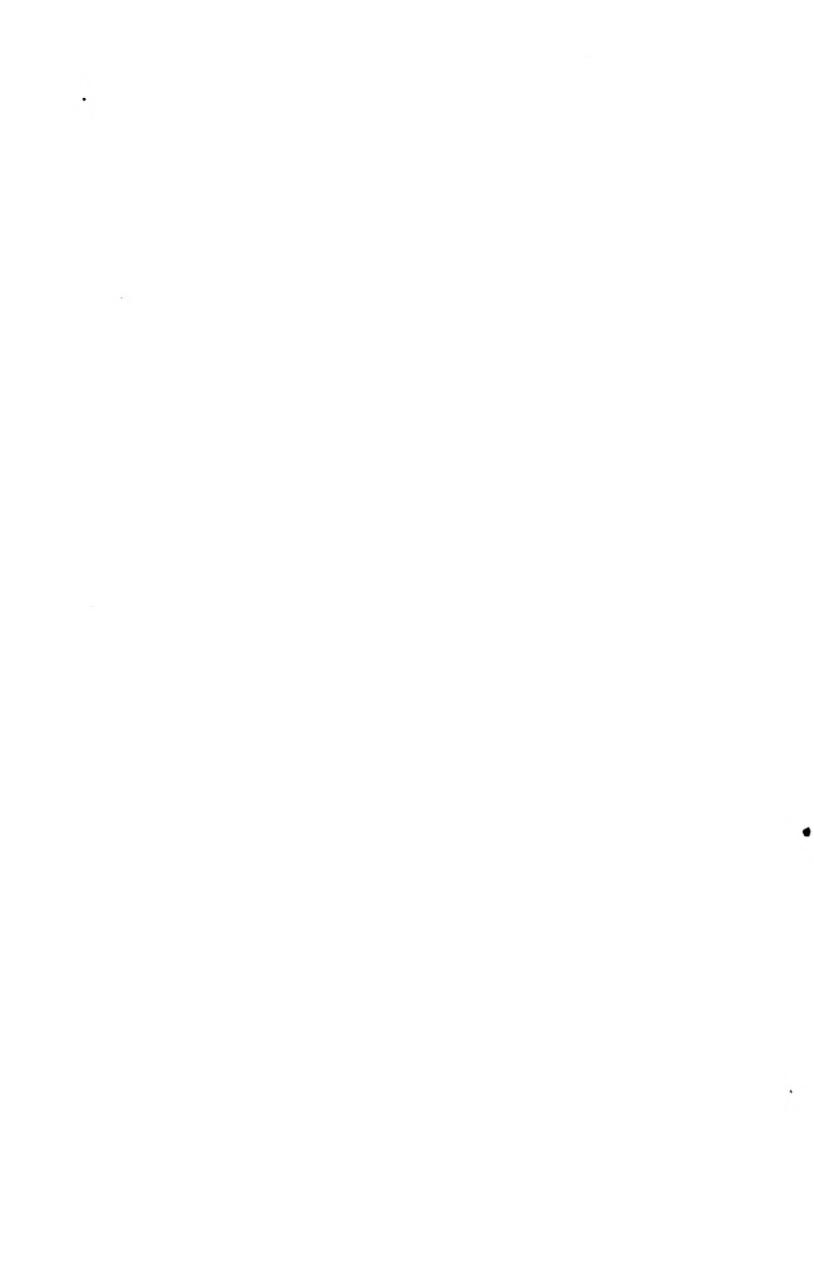




*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

### TWO TOMMIES TALKING IT OVER.

No doubt the opinions of the soldiers would prove interesting reading. The cumbersome outfit, as shown, is hardly conducive to a pleasant frame of mind, but Tommy is nearly always cheerful.



never mention what seems the perfectly natural thing for a British soldier to do.

It was to the aid of a sorely-trying remnant of British Tommies that we were sent. They had suffered, only God and themselves knew how much—but they were holding, and reinforcements were needed badly.

As usual, we fell in at dusk. The ordinary banter and repartee flashed backwards and forwards, but it seemed to me a trifle forced. I knew it was in my case, but I had to keep up the bluff that I was not afraid.

Male readers may smile at my cowardice, that is, those who have not seen men die in battle. But reason it out, O contemptuous ones. You, perhaps, may be brave. I am not, and in addition I have always had a repugnance for fighting. I am afraid in an ordinary fight, and can always, in imagination, feel the impact of a fist landing with a sickening crunch on my features. Before the war, I have often, only by sheer effort of will, kept myself from fainting at the killing of a hog.

Imagine then, after having had experience with

the killing and maiming of strong men; after having seen young boys mangled and dying; heard the pitiful cry of lonely, wounded laddies from the blackness of No Man's Land at night, the gasp for "mother" from some expiring stalwart; the stench; the filth—ah God! how I sweated with horror at the thought of being sent into it again. Yet, thank God, I hold the respect of my surviving comrades, and those in Valhalla will welcome "Bobbie," when he joins them.

A letter from one of my officers that reached me in the hospital—just a short pencil-written message—is my greatest treasure on earth. Knowing to the full how fearful I always was in action, and how that constant dread was ever present, I show it to few. I am utterly undeserving of such a message from such a man.

Courage is no greater in one nation than in another. Among French, Italian, Russian, Canadian, Anzac or British, human self-sacrifice is about equal. Bravery is the monopoly of none, and bravery has so many different sides that it cannot be defined.

I have seen boys, brought up in refined homes, gentle sweet-faced laddies — the last people in the world one would associate with soldiers — rise to heights of the most superb self-sacrifice. Their very refinement has sent them into the jaws of hell with pale faces and horror-stricken eyes, but the mighty spirit has carried them through.

You, mothers or sisters, who fear for your boy, because he is timid, or because he has never left your side, cease troubling your hearts. This conflict demands more than the physical courage of the animal, and the timid man often turns out the very bravest in action.

But back to our campaigning. The order was given to the column to move off, and soon nothing was heard but the trudging of feet. Marching over rough cobbled roads, pock-marked with shell holes, is not conducive to conversation. We met small groups of Tommies on their way to rest. The wonder of it! Plastered with mud, scarcely able to walk from sheer fatigue, they joshed us unmercifully, telling us with grim humor what we were in for. Whole platoons

from the regiments of these men lay out in No Man's Land, never to hear the word of command again, yet their comrades who survived had the stomach to crack jokes at our expense. And then came a bunch of the guards. Cut to ribbons at La Bassée, only a day or so before, yet here were the survivors, tired out as they must be, marching along to the music of a few mouth-organs, with that little swaggering swing of the shoulders—"a touch of the London swank."

Dear reader, when some skeptical anti-British friend asks why France should be called upon to do it all, please tell them that the British Guards Brigade has been remade no less than twenty-five times since the war began. Not reinforced, but *REMADE*—new men, new equipment, new everything.

How could we see all this, is asked, if it was dark. Out in France, near the firing line, flares and searchlights are continually lighting up the whole country side.

Ambulances with their moaning freight would roll past us. The sight of these again caused my

heart to tighten, as though clutched by some big hand. Their number was appalling, and so near to the firing line were they, that we knew the fighting was terribly severe.

Still, I was not given much time to let my feelings of horror work on me. There was work to be done. No sooner had the last ambulance passed us than we began to click casualties. I was despatched with different messages up and down the column. Round the corner we swung. Wh-o-o-f! Crump! a big one landed just over the heads of the leading platoon. Woo-oo-oo! screamed a "coal box" (5.9 shell), landing and exploding with a mighty rumble only a few yards away from the major.

Fritz was getting ready to give the roads a thorough searching. To defeat his plans as much as possible, we deployed from the road into the fields on our left. The Boche, unfortunately for us, chose this moment to send up a series of flares. He evidently grew suspicious and had probably seen us moving. T-r-r-r-r-r said his magic (machine) guns. "God!" "Oh mother!" from here and there as some poor lad went over. We dived

into shallow ditches and, crouching under this frail cover, tried to avoid the shower. We were successful in dodging the machine guns, but shelling was a different matter. However, both died down after awhile, and we began to stretch ourselves.

In utter darkness we moved off. We turned once I know, but it was not till day broke that we found we were behind a low parapet, built of nothing but earth covered with sods. As protection from fire, it, of course, was useless, but it served its purpose by affording cover from view. It was about a thousand yards from the second line, was hard to reach by machine gun fire, but an easy prey to artillerymen. While we occupied this flimsy defense, however, we were fortunate in getting off for several hours without casualties. The Colonel was agreeably surprised when I took the message from the major to him, stating that we had had no casualties that day.

Although it was our good fortune to escape that day, such was not the case with a battery of artillery that was parked some six hundred yards at the back of us. This battery about four o'clock in



the afternoon opened up for a few rounds on the Fritz position. Probably the gunners were annoyed at the repeated efforts of the Germans to locate them. Big shells had landed uncomfortably close to the copse in which the British battery was hidden throughout the day, and it was evident the German gunners were searching for them. In all probability, some wandering German airman had seen the battery open fire, and of course directed the fire of his own guns. A huge shell dropped into the very center of the copse, to be followed almost instantly by another. Trees and "camouflage" of grass and boughs were blown to ribbons, while half the body (the head and forelegs) of a horse landed on the front side of our flimsy defenses. The battery of course was silenced, and presently the dazed, shell-shocked men were incoherently telling the story of what had happened to their guns.

As the sun went down a storm of strafing began, while up and down the line flares soared skyward, and an incessant stream of rapid fire told us that either one side or the other had attacked. The

order came "Stand to." We were not to be launched into it, however, for the firing died down into an intermittent rifle exchange, but the Hun guns never ceased their hateful roaring till almost daylight.

The limit to which human endurance can go was practically reached one afternoon, when, throwing myself down for an hour's sleep, I was aroused and told to report to the major. He gave me a message and told me to get to headquarters with it as quick as my legs could carry me. Headquarters, as the crow flies, was about a mile away, and instead of the usual road, I thought I would go straight to it. That decision came very nearly preventing the writing of this record or the delivery of that message.

Just as I started out the Germans began a furious strafe and, at the same time, the French seventy-fives and our own few sixty-pounders raised their voices in a mighty chorus. Shells were bursting everywhere and the din simply stunned me. In addition I was continually falling over a wreck of barbed wire and trip wires,

into shell holes and my face once coming in contact with that of a dead guardsman's almost caused me to lose my reason, then—blank. All I remember was reaching the road, sitting down and trying to remember what my name was, what I was there for, and where I was. Another runner happening to notice my plight, took me to headquarters himself. What happened I was not conscious of. It was told me later.

The Colonel, growing black in the face, trying to elicit what I was there for, was fast losing his temper. I tried to make him understand, but all I could do was to open my mouth and make a gasping sort of noise. My wind and senses had absolutely left me. A captain standing near guessed what the trouble was, took hold of me kindly, bathed my face and head in cold water and revived me sufficiently to enable me to deliver my message.

## CHAPTER XXIX

### MORE HELL

THE next morning the word was passed for runners, and the company runners hied themselves to the major. He in turn told us we were to report to the Colonel for detailed instructions, and that we were to find out as much about our whereabouts as possible, the best routes to headquarters, to the front line, etc. This we promptly proceeded to do, and in due time arrived before the Old Man. His words to us I have forgotten, but we left him with an appreciation of the ticklish work on hand.

On our way back we all took different routes back to the company. The idea, of course, was to get a knowledge of all the best roads to take when things were hot. Each man mapped out a rough sketch of the road he had taken for the benefit of the others. My road took me for about a

quarter of a mile down the cobbled road, where I turned off for the major's headquarters. I parted from another of the runners here, his route taking him through the village. Incidentally, this coolest of all cool fishes, stopped amongst the shattered houses to see, as he afterwards phrased it, "If there was anything there that nobody had any use for."

I might say the Germans were always busy with their guns on the devastated place, but the incident only goes to show the very peculiar fatalism, that every soldier unconsciously acquires. If he was to be killed in that village, he would get it; that is all there was to it, so he calmly searched the brick piles. The horribly mangled trunk of a tall soldier did not make me any too happy when I stumbled over it directly after leaving my partner. Still I carefully mapped out my route, and meeting another clan runner, we walked the rest of the trip to the major's quarters together.

"Hi mates," said a voice apparently from the bowels of the earth, "come and 'ave a drink o' tea."

The voice came from a field kitchen cunningly hidden in a bank of the road.

"You bet," was our reply together.

The owner of the voice, a short sturdy Cockney, filled a dixie and handed it to me.

I took a long drink, then handed the canteen to my chum.

"I think I'll stretch me legs," said our host.

Forthwith he stepped from his shelter into the road. He had barely taken a dozen steps, when a small shell landed quite a distance in front of him. About a second after the explosion, with a cry, the man threw himself flat on his face and lay still. Both of us knew that the shell had landed too far up the road to be very dangerous to him. We ran to our host, turned him over, only to find that he was stone dead.

"Well I'm jiggered," said my runner chum.

"What is it?" I asked.

"Killed by a stone."

It was quite true. The shell had hit the cobbles, and a flying splinter of stone had taken him in the head, killing him instantly.

We helped to bury him. Killed in the very act of showing kindness to a comrade! Another debt to brother Boche.

That day the company was gradually moved to a more advanced position, and again my heart tightened as I listened to the roar of the fight in front. I was kept busy carrying messages backwards and forwards to headquarters, to the front line, to the signallers, and with frequent messages to the artillery.

It may be of interest to some for me to relate how I saw one of my messages acted upon. My message was a verbal one, and I delivered it as I received it as follows:

“To O. C. 2nd Artillery Brigade:

“Please search wood on my left flank, range about 2,000 yards.”

“From O. C. No. 2 Co. 5th Battalion.

“*Time, 3 P. M.*”

The artillery O. C. in charge was seated in the forked branches of a tall elm tree, which by another of those unaccountable miracles had escaped Fritz's attention. Knowing the Boche's methods,

I expected every minute to see the tree smashed to flinders by a salvo from his guns. The message, however, had to be delivered to him, so up the tree I scrambled. I felt as though forty different Boche artillery observers had their eyes glued upon me when I climbed that tree. Nothing happened however to the tree or its occupants, and I hailed the beaming artillery O. C.

“Hello!” roared he.

“Hello, sir.”

“Great work the boys are doing.”

“Yes, sir.”

Then I repeated my message.

“Yours to command,” said he, and bellowed an order through the mouthpiece of his 'phone.

“Do you want to see what happens?” said he.

“By gum, yes,” said I, forgetting his rank in my excitement. True enough the wood was tapped at the very first shot, but after a few rounds, although the shooting was excellent, he gave the order to “Cease fire.”

“What have you quit for, sir?”

“No more shells,” laconically.



I descended the tree and returned to the major.

All this time the fight increased in intensity, the Germans putting over a fearful bombardment, both on the front line and away to the rear. Casualties were coming by our location in an endless stream. Some were being carried to the dressing station, but those who could walk or hobble at all, were making their way back as well as they could. It was a pitiful, yet a wonderful sight. Their battered uniforms, plastered with mud and filth, bandages of various hues on their heads, and dressings on their limbs and bodies. Some were being helped along by their comrades; others limped past with the aid of a rifle used as a crutch. Some would stop for a rest, and we would do all we could to help them, at the same time asking how things were going up in front. They told a story of tremendous bombing attacks, on both sides, but Fritz was having the better of the argument, being more liberally supplied with bombs. On hearing this, I felt again that gnawing feeling at the pit of my stomach, for I knew there would soon be some ticklish work for me. Suddenly the

sight of that stream of wounded sickened me and I turned to hide my face, and ran straight into Campbell's arms.

"Good God! Ken, I shall go crazy if I don't do something, those poor devils are getting on my nerves."

"Pluck up, son," said he, "you'll feel better when we go up, and I for one am expecting it any minute."

No word of condemnation at my funk, just encouragement. Such was our Ken Campbell. Brave as a lion himself, yet possessed of a rare sympathy for those not so blessed.

The cheeriness of these wounded was wonderful, and, in spite of their hurts, they regaled us as they passed with the story of the times they were going to have in Blighty.

Then my call came. "Pass the word for a runner." Away I went to the major.

"You know the way to headquarters well?"

"Yes, sir."

"Take this to Colonel T—, and on your way up you will leave a squad of bombers at the bot-

tom of the road leading to Colonel L—'s trenches."

The bombers were all ready for me, and stringing out in a line we began our journey. We were lucky, and I left the bombers, minus two who had been slightly wounded by shrapnel, at the appointed place. Wishing them luck I managed to reach the Old Man, terribly scared, but unhurt.

Just as I started on my return journey a fusillade of bullets began to chip up everything, and I crawled along thanking heaven I was a little man, and wishing at the same time I was half as big. By and by I arrived in safer territory, and in spite of the nature of the ground, finished the trip at a jog trot.

Again the boys were moved nearer to the first line. Under a terrific shell fire, in small bodies they stole to the dugouts in the grounds of what had been a beautiful residence. An order came that night for the boys to go up on a working party. I was utterly worn out, but gritting my teeth I fell in with the rest. Once more Ken Campbell showed his great heart. "God bless him and rest him

where he lies." His superior does not exist, and he will always be my soldier ideal so long as I live.

"Say, Baldwin, you stay behind."

"What for, Sergeant-major?"

"Don't answer me back; you're to stay here and sleep."

Without a word I fell out, and walked to a dug-out where I stretched myself out to sleep. But sleep would not come. I was worried. I was wondering whether it was really a working party the boys were detailed for. I imagined what they would think of me if I stayed back when they faced it. Sleep was out of the question, so I walked out to the sentry on the road.

"Say, Alec," said I, "do you think the boys are going to take part in an attack tonight?"

"Don't know, Bobbie, but why should you worry?"

"Hell! the boys will think I funkcd."

Further conversation, for awhile, stopped as we crouched, while Fritz treated the dressing sta-

tion opposite to two big shells. We were unhurt.

Wounded men were now passing in streams, and I asked if any of the Fifth were there.

"No," was the reply, "the Fifth went over to-night."

"Oh, heavens! Alec, they've been in a charge and they'll think I funkcd."

"Don't be a blankety-blank fool, Bub. You have done your share today and you were ordered to stay back."

But my mental agony increased. What would Fritz and Lib think of me? What would Muirhead, Shields and the others think?

Presently a breathless runner stopped and asked, "Do either of you guys know the way to headquarters?"

"Sure," said I, "come on."

"What's doing?" said I, as we trotted along.

"Oh Fritz has the wind up (excited) and is rapid firing."

"Is that all? You're from the Eighth, eh?"

"Yep."

"Has the Fifth been doing anything?"

"I heard they had gone over on our right."

I almost vomited with shame as I heard his words.

The two of us successfully dodged everything, and I led the way to the Old Man. The runner gave his message and was asked how everything seemed.

"Are the men holding?" said the adjutant.

"Sure, sir," was the reply with that ring of pride in his comrades that made one's heart sing.

"Take a rest then, my boy, you need it, and take your own time getting back."

"Thank you, sir."

This over, I ventured to address the adjutant, who I thought was a little gentler natured than the Old Man.

"Sir, did the Fifth go over tonight?"

"No, they have a damned ticklish job, though, digging out in front."

"May I go to them, sir?"

"Why?"

"You understand, sir, they'll accuse me of funk-ing."

“You go straight away and sleep, or I’ll have you crimed for insolence.”

Oh, the relief! I slowly trudged back and slept the coma of utter exhaustion. The afternoon following things became desperate, and it was our lot to be sent up to help reinforce our depleted lines.

A curious incident that often gives me food for thought took place just before we ventured out on our desperate attempt to reach the line in broad daylight. In the corner of two battered walls, birds had built a nest, and two or three young ones were occupying it. To keep from view of the airmen we took shelter behind these walls. I, as usual, was full of forebodings about the journey we were so soon to make. Judge of my wonderment when one of the boys called me to look at the way the parent birds were feeding their young. Apparently oblivious of war or anything else, with exclamations of delight, he studied the birds as no naturalist ever did. The sight sent my thoughts flying back to a little English home in Derby.

“Spread out, boys,” came the order.

Our journey had begun. As we passed the third line we were handed additional ammunition, two bandoliers per man. The major left a file of men under the command of a lieutenant to look after our ammunition magazine. They shook hands and then we deployed out, bang in the open.

With fearful cracks the shrapnel burst over our heads. Machine guns clattered, but with perfect steadiness the boys made their way to the second line. Here a fearful sight met our gaze. The trench was battered to pieces, while dead and wounded men lay everywhere.

A call was sent for volunteers to get some of the stricken lads from the first line. An immediate response was given and under a terrible fire most of the bad cases were pulled out.

The attack we expected fizzled out, but the fire never ceased.

Campbell came along and asked for volunteers to carry out a badly smashed man. Four of my chums, each one as husky a specimen of manhood as one would wish to see, swore profanely they were "his meat."



“Will you go out with them and carry their rifles?” said he to me.

“Yes,” said I, as my knees knocked together. The wounded man was placed on a stretcher and our journey began.

The man on the stretcher was a big man and in spite of the strength of the four volunteer bearers, they were taxed to the uttermost owing to the roughness of the ground and the necessity for taking cover every other minute in order to save the wounded man and themselves from injury.

We finally reached the road safely, with me bringing up the rear. I was carrying five rifles besides my own, and thinking it would be easier to handle them, I slung two over each shoulder, and fastened them with the bayonets slanting front downwards, and with the wounded man's and my own, one in each hand, I fairly bristled with bayonets.

In one of our dashes for the ditch to seek cover, I tripped and fell forward and the bayonets of the rifles that were slung on my shoulders and slanting forward plunged into the earth and forcibly sus-

pended me in midair, and there I was compelled to hang until my chums released me by taking me by the collar and setting me on my feet. Roaring with laughter my pals advised me to unfix the bayonets and, said Batch, "Don't go trying to stab yourself with them the next time we have to beat it for cover. Oh, runt, you will be the death of me yet with your comical ways."

Even the wounded man, with five bad shrapnel wounds, laughed and then moaned with the pain.

Nothing further happened until we came to the dressing station and one of the doctors curtly dismissed us. Batch and myself decided we would make for our old dugout by a short route, going by the north side of the dressing station. It was now getting dark and on our way Batch inadvertently plunged head foremost into a dyke. First, a guzzle, and then things unprintable. I successfully cleared the dyke by grabbing an overhanging willow and swinging myself across.

Again we started, falling over tangled wire in the rank grass, and, to make matters worse, stinging nettles, which grew plentifully in this par-

ticular place, came constantly in contact with our hands or faces. Words again failed us. As a climax to our feelings, Fritz right at this particular moment decided to shell this particular place. Deafened, almost blinded by the detonation and the flash of shells, we found ourselves finally not at our dugout, but at the dressing station from which we had started. We had traveled in a circle. I could hear nothing but the grinding of Batch's big white teeth. I then determined to be the guide of our little party and so informed Batch, and in half the time that we had taken to make the long course, we found ourselves comfortably ensconced in the dugout at the house I have previously mentioned, and in short order Batch had his pipe out, smoking strongly with the complete satisfaction of a man who has done his duty. I searched for my pipe and was dismayed at not being able to find it.

"Where is your pipe, Bub?" said Batch.

"Blime me, I guess I must have left it out in the dugout by the apple tree so I will go and see if it is there."

“Better find it, as I have some St. Clair’s mixture from Newcastle.”

This tobacco was the joy of a soldier’s heart and I made my way to the dugout where I felt sure I had left it and there sure enough it was lying on a couple of sandbags. I grabbed it and started back to rejoin Batch, but, just as I did so, I heard the peculiar moaning sound of a “coal box” that seemed to be coming straight at me. Sweating with apprehension I threw myself flat and waited the arrival of hell’s messenger. Cr-r-r-mp! it landed right on the dugout I had just vacated. Why I was not killed instantly is one of those miracle mysteries that can never be answered, for I was only about twenty feet away when that shell, which was a 5.9 high explosive, burst directly on the dugout.

I flung myself down beside Batch, telling him of the incident. All the sympathy I got was, “Serves you damn well right; a soldier ought to know better than to leave his pipe lying around loose.”

About an hour after this the boys came down

again, with many familiar faces missing. We were allowed a few hours of interrupted sleep, and about daylight we stood to, as is the custom on the Western Front. It was most uncannily quiet after the past days of a continuous fire; the silence disturbed us, and we could see by the actions of the officers that they too were uneasy. Still the fatalistic spirit of the men reasserted itself and the poker parties soon resumed their sittings.

## CHAPTER XXX

### THE LAST FIGHT

**M**IDNIGHT; we were sleeping in an orchard about a mile back of the lines; I was awakened by a sergeant and told to "Fall in." We did so, and the captain told us what we had to do.

"Boys, you are going to try and take Redoubt B; the artillery, what we have of it, will shell their first line for half an hour, and then will lift and play on their second line. While they are doing this you will go over. There's a lot of us who are not going to come back, but the job must be done and I know you will do it."

While he was speaking, thoughts of mother, father and home surged more vividly through my mind than at any other time, but moments for reflection were few. We swung out of the orchard on to the road and nothing could be heard except

the dull sound of trudging feet. Flares would shoot up into the sky, to hang suspended for a moment, and die away leaving everything in gloom once more. Every now and then a muffled shriek or a coughing gurgle would tell of the passing or wounding of some gallant lad.

By that corner of hell we trudged silently, every man busy with his own thoughts. At last we turned up the death trap to our left, on the famous Z— road. Over its ghastly piles of dead we filed on for many yards without touching solid ground, so thickly lay the dead.

At this time we were sighted by the Huns and treated to a fusillade of machine guns and rifle fire. We were now almost to shelter and the men made their way, as only men under fire can, to the safety of a well-constructed trench.

A short rest, then on again, this time up a shallow communication trench and then out behind a low-lying parapet. Three or four huge Bavarians lay with faces to the stars; they had been hurriedly laid to one side by our leading files.

The fitful light of the flares intensified the mute

horror of the fallen jaw and the unspeakable terror of the dead faces. Still, such sights now failed to move us, and with but a perfunctory glance we passed on.

Here we waited in silence for the word. What an hour of mental agony. The steady hammer, hammer of the light guns, the monotonous bass muttering of the heavies, the shrill, hysterical crackle of machine gun and rifle and the shrieking and cracking of bursting shells seemed to sing hell's requiem to us poor mortals waiting. My God! that waiting. At such a time man's trivial thoughts sink into utter oblivion and the naked soul shows bare.

Apparently calm and indifferent, yet filled with a fear, the like of which no one except those who have waited as we waited can understand, we listened for the word.

"Over and at them," and the next thing I remember I was plunging forward through the mud of No Man's Land. On each side of me men were falling, cursing, praying and gasping, but unscathed I went on, two things mingling





*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

READY FOR A RAID ON THE ENEMY'S TRENCHES.



*Photo from Underwood & Underwood, N. Y.*

THE RAIDING PARTY GOING TO "GIVE 'EM HELL."



queerly in my head: One was the words of a doggerel song we sang on the march,

Wash me in the water that you wash the dioxies  
in  
And I shall be whiter than the whitewash on the  
wall,

and the other, a dull wonder why I was not killed. After an "eternity" of plunging forward, we, a pitiful few, reached our objective, the Huns hurriedly leaving, that is those of them who had not joined their comrades in hell. Still our work was not yet done. The ground had been won, but to take it is one thing, to hold it another, and with all our officers gone and sixty per cent of the men, we must work to consolidate.

Just as I seized a sandbag full of earth to place in front of me, I felt a stinging smack on my ankle, as though I had been kicked. I turned to curse the man who I thought had kicked me and then I fell over with a scream of pain. My left foot was smashed completely by a soft-nosed bullet.

I had merely commenced to feel the sting of

the pain when the Huns rushed us again and it was hand to hand. A Bavarian lunged toward me with rifle clubbed; I closed my eyes, as I was utterly helpless and waited for my skull to be smashed. The blow did not fall. I opened my eyes just in time to see our sergeant-major plunge his bayonet through the Bavarian's neck. Down flopped the Hun on all fours, with his hands one on each side convulsively clutching the bayonet, and he sat immediately opposite me, just a bare few yards intervening, during all the hours I was there, with a hellish grin on his face. When the pain of the wound would subside and I would doze away for a few minutes I would awaken with a shudder, as I thought the dead Hun was moving his face closer and closer toward mine.

At this time I had an undying instance of the devotion of my chum, Morgan. He also was wounded, not so badly as I was, but time and again, at a terrible risk to himself, he would crawl over and help me regain a more comfortable position, all the time suffering intensely from his own wound, which was very painful.

Nothing could be done for any of the wounded, so serious was the position of the remnant of the boys. Their business was to hold what they had won and the wounded must do the best they could. The remnant, however, were of the Fifth and they held until relieved and reinforcements arrived twenty-four hours later.

## CHAPTER XXXI

### THE AFTERMATH

ONCE during that weary day, the Germans put over such a terrific barrage of shrapnel, that I, for one, thought it impossible for any of our wounded to survive. Such is the mercy of the Hun. Hour after hour passed, casualties mounted steadily up, but those laddies held. As time went on, the pain in my wounded leg became excruciating, and, forgetting the etiquette of the Western Front that a man must not squeal too much when he is hit, I groaned aloud. I shall be ashamed to meet many of my comrades in later days, for they remember my whimpering.

Night came, darkness being heralded by a storm of strafing on both sides. The bullets thudded about the top of the water hole, while the noise of the strife drowned my yells, as the gangrene slowly ate its way up my limb. Hour after hour

I lay, till at last that grand sergeant-major of ours came along and gave me a nip of rum. Oh, you psalm-singers, who raise your holy hands in horror at the thought of the perdition the boys are bound for, if they should happen to take a nip of rum to keep a little warmth in their poor battered bodies, I wish you could all lie shivering in a hole full of icy liquid mud, with every nerve in your body quivering with pain, with the harrowing moans of the wounded forever ringing in your ears, with hell's own din raging all around. Any one of you would need a barrel of it to keep his miserable life in his body.

Here and now let me say, the man who refuses the rum issue is considered a fool.

Picture to yourselves the dawn after a bitter cold night in the trenches. Weary soldiers wet to the skin, working all night in a most dangerous place, probably expecting an immediate attack from the enemy, dirty, vermin covered, muddy, and without one single comfort. If rum helps under these conditions who can say nay. Some people have the idea that the men are liberally

dosed with rum before they go over the top. This may be true in some instances, but as far as I know, no British troops ever need that kind of Dutch courage to go over the top. All the rum I ever got during my whole term of service in Flanders would not make a man drunk, and it is a question whether the amount I had for three months in the summer would make a seasoned toper unsteady. All that a man gets is about the third part of a small cup every night and morning.

The following from the London *Winning Post* just about expresses my thoughts in this regard:

I suppose we're a lot of heathens,  
Don't live on the angel plan,  
But we're sticking it here in the trenches,  
And doing the best we can.

When preachers over in Blighty,  
Who talk about Kingdom Come,  
Ain't pleased with our performance,  
And are wanting to stop our rum,

Water, they say, would be better;  
Water! Great God, out here?  
Why, we're up to our knees in water —  
Do you think we're standing in beer?



Oh, it sounds all right from the pulpit,  
When you sit in a cushioned pew;  
But try four days in the trenches,  
And see what water will do.

Some of the coffin-faced Blighters  
I think must be German-bred;  
It's time that they called in the doctor,  
For it's water they have in the head.

That nip of rum put hope into my heart once more, and I bit my lips and stifled my agony as well as I could.

Dawn broke, and just as the first streaks crept into the sky, the firing died down and that mystery which broods over the wonder of night turning into day pervaded outraged nature and even warring man. As I watched, the details of my watery retreat became plainer and plainer; I grew ashamed of my cowardice, and I did my best to stifle my groans.

At last Sergeant Purslowe, a replica of Campbell in coolness and leadership, noticed my plight and immediately set to work to get me carried out. My comrades were only too willing, but they

waited in vain for a stretcher. Alas! There were entirely too few to accommodate half the wounded. Nothing for it but to carry me on their backs. Oh! the agony of that rough ride, and oh! the sacrifice of those blood brothers of mine. With my foot hanging by a shred of flesh, the bones grating against one another, shivering with cold, yet with perspiration standing out from every pore with the pain, I was gradually carried from the line we had taken. Once when passing a huge shell crater, the pain not yet having robbed me of my senses, I asked to be left till night-time in its shelter. It was broad daylight, and there was that little bunch of men risking utter annihilation just that a stricken chum might live.

They cursed my groans; they cursed the Huns; in fact, their language was sulphurous, yet I noticed I was saved from all jar or jolt, as far as they could prevent it; and when I asked to be left in the shell hole they cursed me for a blankety-blank fool, and profanely refused to do it. Think of it, you psalm-singers, who are worried over the morals of your soldiers. Picture those men, in

full view of the Huns, in broad daylight, refusing to leave their chum at any cost. Any minute, any second, might blast them off the face of the earth, yet no thought for their own safety, until "Shorty" was at the dressing station. Since that time, Campbell, Shields and Cameron, have paid the supreme price, while Muirhead, Mead and Nish are crippled for life.

It was curious to watch their hesitation, even in the face of the danger they were in, to get me over the parapet into what was now the second line trench. They hated to cause me pain. A sympathetic Cockney, of the L. R. B.'s, gently lowered me to the fire-step and proceeded to get a stretcher. My ride now, although terribly painful, was decidedly easier. They tied my wounded leg to the sound leg, thus preventing that horrible rubbing together of the fractured bones.

Reaching the dressing station I shook hands—for the last time, alas—with Campbell and Shields and the others, and received a huge draught of scalding tea. The dressing station was completely empty and it was thought I would

have to wait until night, but one belated ambulance driver came to have a final look to see if any of the boys needed a ride down. I was hoisted aboard and oblivion promptly followed. I awoke to find myself lying in the middle of a road on a stretcher and a doctor smiling down at me.

"How are you, son?" said he.

"Not so bad," said I, "is it good enough for Blighty?"

"Yes," replied the genial saw-bones. "I'm going to take that foot off right now, and I'm going to hurt you, son. It's hardly worth while giving you any dope, since I've only to cut through that bit of flesh. Are you game?"

"Go ahead," I replied, "I'm sick and tired of seeing the thing."

Smiling down at me, to reassure me, he reached in his pocket, produced two cigars, placed one in his mouth, lit it, then placed it in mine. The other he placed in the pocket of my shirt. I lay back, averting my eyes, expecting every minute to feel a horrible cutting sensation. Then I heard the doctor sigh. I looked up and to my

astonishment my foot was gone. Such was the amazing gentleness and skill of the wonderful doctor; God bless him wherever he is!

## CHAPTER XXXII

### IN HEAVEN

**M**Y foot gone, I knew that my fighting and marching days were over, and the feeling of safety after what I had undergone brought on the inevitable reaction. I became light-headed, and shortly after my senses left me completely, and I remember only vaguely snatches of my journey from the firing line to the embarkation port for Blighty. Several more operations on my leg I knew had taken place, but except for a night at, I believe, Le Touquet, I remember little.

Here a little French nurse attended to six of us. As far as I can recollect, we were in the room of a château, for the walls were covered with old tapestry. Oh! the wonderful little French lady. No task was too mean for her to perform for us. In my weak condition I wanted to stroke her spotless apron, to see if she were real, and that little

French nurse was the first angel I ever saw. I doubt whether I shall ever see any angels after this life finishes for me, but if anyone doubtful of their future in the next world wishes to see the real angels, let them go to any of our big hospitals in France or Britain; there they will see them. God bless those magnificent women of France and Britain. And I know, before the Hun is finally vanquished, the women of the United States will be vieing with their sisters overseas in their devotion to the land they represent and the holiness of the cause to which they have so freely given their stalwart men folk.

At last I was loaded on the Blighty ship, and my journey to heaven commenced. So far as I remember, nothing of moment happened on the trip. Southampton was our destination, and the first breath of air I took into my lungs, when lying on the deck of the ship there, seemed the sweetest thing I ever tasted—free from all smell of bursting shells, free from taint of rotting bodies, free from the danger of flying death, and, above all, the air of England.

And now I came near to losing what the Huns had failed to take. The people, when we were being moved from ship to train in their desperation to show their sympathy for us, showered kindness upon us. Right here and now I want to say I would lose fifty legs, if I had them, or fifty arms, for those wonderful people; and in my weak condition I was in danger of dying from sheer excitement and happiness.

Up through that wondrous green country side we sped, and oh, how I persisted in lifting myself from my cot, in spite of the protests of the nurses, to look out on that smiling land. What a change from the utter devastation of that hell's land from which I had come. At Birmingham we stopped for a space, being met by a party of nurses, doctors and Red Cross people. Oh, their wondrous kindness! In spite of the pain, I considered myself the luckiest man alive to be so spoilt. I often wish I was wounded again.

Leaving Birmingham, from where I sent a short message to my mother, acquainting her of the fact of having "got mine," the train did not stop till



we reached Liverpool. We were met at the depot by ambulance cars, and on these we were loaded. I was so happy, I swore at the driver so picturesquely, and so fluently, that he stopped his car to congratulate me. Passing through the city we were bombarded by the populace with every conceivable dainty they could get. Some of them landed on my game leg, and I again earned the driver's profane admiration.

Suddenly I became aware that the man on the other stretcher was trying to attract my attention.

"What is it, chum?" said I.

In a husky whisper he answered, "Shot through the guts, and I ain't seen a bloody German. Ain't that the devil?" I agreed and nodded my acquiescence. To the anxious ones I am glad to say he recovered, and, although not fit for more active service, is still doing fine.

Arrived at the hospital we were unloaded and carried to our respective cots. When they set me down by the side of what was to be my bed, the orderly says to me:

"What's the matter with you?"

"Oh, just a bit of a wound in the foot."

"Is that all?" said he.

"Take a look," says I. He did so.

"Aw hell," said he, "I was going to cuss yer fer swinging the lead, and going to tell yer ter get on th' bed yerself, and I begs yer pardon. All right, son."

Next along came Doctor Evans, who, apparently oblivious of my yells and sulphurous remarks, proceeded to examine my leg.

"Another piece to come off," says he, "and it will have to be done in a few hours' time or you'll lose the whole limb."

I was sick of the wretched thing.

"Go ahead, sir," said I. Then after a few hours' waiting I started for the "pictures"—for my last carving. Now although I remembered little of my journey through France, I remembered sufficient to know that I had used some typical Canadian profanity while under the influence of ether. Out there I did not mind, for only men were present at the carving, but here was a situation. A nurse was accompanying me to the oper-

ating theater. "Oh, horrors!" thought I, "I know I shall cuss. What will she think? I mustn't swear, oh! I mustn't swear!" Trying to impress on my subconscious mind that I must not swear while under the influence of ether, I was placed on the table and—oblivion.

I came to myself with a yell. I fancied I had been rising to the surface of a deep ocean, as black as ink, and just as I was about to drown I awoke. Taking stock of my surroundings, I looked across the ward. A man was looking at me and laughing till I thought he would hurt himself.

"Well! what the devil is amusing you?" I asked irritably, the horrible nausea having its effect.

"Well, my son," was the reply, "I've been in Africa, India, Singapore, and a few places on this old globe, but I'm hanged if I ever heard language till I heard you a little while ago. Whew! it was an education."

Then he told me the story. All had gone well until I had been placed on my cot. Now a man will, under the influence of an anaesthetic, ap-

parently seem to know what is going on around him, and will answer questions coherently, though he knows nothing about it. I had been lying on my cot a few minutes when an orderly came by, carrying a tray of enamel cups. He stumbled and fell, upsetting the tray and its contents with a crash. It was then I reached to heights of superb eloquence, and I was in disgrace.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

### BACK TO EARTH

**I**T was curious to watch the nurses glance furtively in my direction with looks of mingled horror and curiosity. They, too, had heard swearing in their career of healing broken, fighting men, but in one apparently so young and unsophisticated—"it is just shocking!"

After the horrible nausea had left me, the nurse asked me what I would like, and what I had longed for a thousand and one times in France came to my mind. "A bottle of Bass or Guinness'," I said. Back she came with a little of the Guinness' in a cup, and I sank into the first dreamless sleep I had had for ages.

I was awakened by the pain in my limb, so began to interest myself in the other patients. Oh, the exhibition of patience, courage and suffering, both on the part of patients and the doctors and nurses.

Doctor, or Major Evans came to see me. "How are you, laddie?"

"Doing all right, sir."

"Good boy! From the prairies, aren't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"You need fresh air, for a constitution like you possess was never made indoors, and I will have you carted out into the open air every fine day we have."

He was as good as his word, and the orderly duly came and, with the help of the sister, I was taken out on to the lawn in front of the ward. I had been there about a quarter of an hour when another patient was carried out and his bed placed alongside mine. I turned to look at the other fellow and a familiar face glared at me. Spontaneously from both of us — "Well, I'll be damned!"

It was Bill Moore, of my own company, sometimes called "Rosie," for a pet name.

"When were you hit?" I asked.

"In the charge a week back."

"Not when we lost all but two of the officers at Z—?"



THE "WAR TWINS."

My chum Moore and I enlisted at the same time, served together at the front, lost our left legs in the same fight, and are now engaged in the same work—trying to help the Cause.





"Yes," said he.

"I got mine there too."

"The devil, you say!"

"Sure," I said.

"What you got?" he asked.

"An explosive bullet."

"Well, I'm jiggered, I was hit by one, too. But where did it take you?"

"In the ankle."

"This is some coincidence, kid, mine was in the ankle, too."

"Which one?"

"The left."

"Same here. When did you get your final chunk taken off?" I asked.

"About thirty hours back."

"Same here. But, say, who gave you the right to mimic me?"

We talked and talked until exhausted and we were told to stop it.

This wonderful chain of coincidences would scarcely be complete were I to leave out the fact that we are of the same age, enlisted at the same

time, in the same company, and, as related above, were wounded at the same time, in the same battle, on the same day. And, to make the chain perfect, we received our artificial legs on the same day in the city of Toronto, Ontario. And, the finishing touch to the list, here we are again, working together for all we are worth in the task of getting recruits through the British-Canadian Recruiting Mission in Chicago. Little wonder is it that we are christened the "War Twins."

Time sped rapidly in the hospital, and the Angel of Healing, coupled with the untiring ministrations of two of the dearest women, my night, and my day nurses, rapidly brought me back to my normal condition of health.

I cannot go further without telling of the wonderful power that lies in a good woman. Nurse Daniels, the night sister, called me her "model patient." I suppose she called every other patient the same thing, unknown to the others. This woman could make men feel better by simply smiling at them. It was pitiful to see the eagerness with which the boys watched for her coming

at night. In she would walk, erect as a guardsman, looking the perfect English lady in her uniform.

“Good evening, children.”

“Good evening, sister.”

“Have you been good boys today?”

“The little Canuck has been trying to swipe some of your photographs, sister.”

“Oh, the little rascal! Doesn’t his face belie his character?” With such light badinage she would make her way through the ward, smoothing a pillow, soothing some poor lad’s agony with those wonderful cool hands of the born healer, jokingly chiding a few of us slightly wounded men for making so much of our wounds in order to get a caress from her, but we always got the caress.

One night, in my restlessness, I had completely removed the dressing from my stump, and that wonderful woman had redressed the stump, brushed my hair, or what remained of it at that time, and departed to other duties without even awakening me.

One of the things which most troubled me dur-

ing the night was the recurrence, regularly for many nights, of a torturing dream, in which I fancied I was being rushed into the fighting again, with my foot hanging on by a shred, and the pain that I felt in my dream, as well as the terror, would cause me to wake up with a frightened shriek, but almost instantly the gentle, cooling hands of my angel nurse would be soothing my aching head, and in a few moments I would be myself again.

The blessed woman seemed to be possessed of a wonderful intuition, for never would I want a glass of lemonade, or some other soothing nourishment, but it was on the locker at my hand before I asked for it.

The attentions showered upon us by visitors were so many and varied that it would take a volume in itself to recount them. Some of them have afforded me a good laugh, more than once. They were all heartfelt and sincere, comical as some of them were, in their desire to do something for us, no matter how small the courtesy might be. Once when careening about on a wheel-chair,

amusing the rest of the boys by my antics, the head sister brought in a lady visitor. This lady had befriended a Canadian boy before he went to the front, and she thought the world of him. The lad had been wounded in the same action as myself, and, learning of his being in the hospital at Liverpool, she hastened to try and find him. Incidentally the good lady had some little comfort for every Canadian boy she ran across.

The lady peered at me through her spectacles, and the head sister, noticing her short-sightedness, came to the rescue with the following:

“No, although this little fellow came over with the Canadians, he is not the one you are looking for, for he is only an Englishman.”

“Dear, oh dear, you don’t tell me! Only an Englishman,” the old lady repeated, half to herself and, smiling at the thought, she resumed her search for the Canadian.

In the light of the detailed accounts given in the newspapers of the United States and Canada of the splendid work performed by the Canadian soldiers on the Western Front, it is barely possible

that the lapsus lingua of the nurse may find a responsive chord in the minds of some in America. There is no doubt it would make an admirable talking point for German propagandists in the spread of a certain phase of their humbug.

Another dear old lady, in the fullness of her heart, and thoroughly sincere, came into the ward one visitors' day. She carried in her hand a bag of candy acid drops, which is often advised as an antidote for thirst. It would take a good many acid drops to ease the parched throat of a wounded man on a hot summer's night.

"Oh, you poor dear boys," said she, as she gravely placed two of the acid drops on our lockers, "how you have suffered for us! Sometimes in the night you may get thirsty, and one of these drops will quench your thirst."

Out of respect for the old dear, we held our outburst until she was well out of the door. The thought of some of those tough old campaigners alleviating their thirst with an acid drop was so irresistably funny that it is a wonder some of the fellows didn't crack some of the stitches of their

wounds, so convulsed were they. One Tommy was particularly uproarious.

"Fawncy the old deah coming round of a morning in the ditch and 'anding us hout one of those hacid drops in plice o' the rum ration! Just fawncy!" And I thought he would split.

Another time when my war twin had laboriously wheeled himself to the hospital gates to see the visitors come in on visitors' day, he had his knee covered with a blanket, and no one could really tell what ailed him. Bill sat thoughtfully watching the "sweet-hearts, wives and muvvers everlastingly passing by," and fuming somewhat to himself at the tardiness of the demure little maiden who had claimed him as her especial charge. While waiting impatiently, a dear old lady approached. She carried a little bag of plums.

"Good-day, my boy, how are you feeling to-day?"

"Oh, fairly well, madam, thank you," said Bill.

"You are a Canadian," noticing the Canadian badge Bill wore proudly on the breast of his hospital jacket.

"Yes, I am a Canadian."

"From what part of Canada do you come?"

"Saskatchewan, madam."

"Dear me, and how far is that?"

"About five thousand miles."

"And are you badly wounded?"

"Oh, no," exhibiting his legs, "the canary flew out of its cage and bit me."

"How terrible! but how wonderful! how magnificent! Just fancy, you have come all that distance to fight for us, and lost your poor leg, too. How can we possibly reward you! Won't you have a plum?" holding out the bag, and Bill extracted a plum.

"Oh, that's nothing at all, ma'am," said Bill. "I'd do the same thing over again, and lose my other leg, if necessary, for the Old Flag."

"How perfectly splendid and noble of you! We never, never can repay you sufficiently. Oh, do have another plum."

Bill gravely and thankfully accepted the other plum, and the good old lady proceeded on her mission of kindness.



When I had become sufficiently strong to take notice of my surroundings, and the love of life had come back to me, I began to wonder how it fared with my own immediate chums. Campbell, Cameron, Muirhead, and Nish, and Shields were all right, for they had carried me from the line, but I was anxious about Libby and Morgan and little Fitzpatrick. Billy Meade, who has not had the prominence in this record that he deserves, was intact, for I remember he almost wept when I said good-bye to him at the dressing station. Bill had been one of my intimates, but so quiet and unassuming in his manner that, knowing him as I do, and knowing that he had returned recently to Canada, it is with diffidence I mention his name at all, but the spirit of Bill was so thoroughly akin to that of my comrades, I must relate a little story about him.

When we started for France, Bill Meade and his chum, Bill Richards, or "Farmer Jones," as we nicknamed him, were in London on French leave. Returning to Salisbury Plain they found the battalion gone. Immediately those two stowed

themselves away among the baggage of a departing artillery brigade. They managed successfully to board the artillery transport, and when the ship was well on her way they showed themselves.

They were arrested and taken before a British officer at S——. Such men delighted the heart of this officer, and he saw to it that they were sent along to us. Our officers, of course, reprimanded them for their conduct, but I know that they often refer to these two boys as men to be proud of.

Little Fitzpatrick wrote me from a hospital in London, and I was relieved to hear from the lad-die. In writing, though, he sorrowfully told me that Libby must be dead, for nothing had been heard of him since the night before the charge. As a matter of fact, he was reported as being killed.

And now I was to have another exhibition of Morgan's peculiar gift of second sight. My chum was located in a hospital in Dublin and at first chance he wrote me. I quote from his letter. He was referring to Libby and the general belief that our fearless little comrade had "gone West."

"Libby is alive! I know it. I saw him last night wearing sergeant's stripes, and you know they can't kill that little black-whiskered stiff."

Next morning I received a letter from Libby himself. He was badly hurt, but alive and in a hospital at Boulogne. He had been hit by shrapnel, and one of them had actually pierced a valve of his heart. In spite of this he lived and actually re-enlisted to go back to the front. After his discharge in Canada, although he hated the thought, he said he felt that his place was back with the lads in Flanders. He lied to the doctors so artistically that he got back to the firing line. But the life had told its tale and poor Lib was again returned and discharged.

That his wonderful nerve has not yet deserted him, let me say that Bill Moore and I attended his wedding in Saskatoon, a few months ago.

Fitzpatrick, only sixteen years old, returned to Canada, but he felt just as Lib felt, and his wound healing perfectly he became sound as ever and again enlisted. He has since been wounded again, healed again, and at this time is probably fighting

round Cambrai. Just think of it, you slackers! Only nineteen and the veteran of a dozen tremendous battles.

After being spoiled by everybody, I at last was sent from the hospital to a convalescent camp. Here I cut loose, the reaction setting in. I was arrested and cautioned, and, having thoughts of a visit home, I decided to behave myself for awhile and apply for sick leave. My repeated applications were for awhile ignored, but at last I said to myself that I must swing the lead. I asked to be paraded in front of the Colonel. I managed to acquire a look of awful suffering on my face, as I walked wearily in to see him on my crutches. Without waiting to be told, I flopped into a chair with a groan, the realism of which surprised myself.

"Well, what is the matter, son?" said the Colonel, as he subsided into his chair after the start he had at my wonderful groan.

In a husky voice, like that of a man absolutely worn out, I replied, "I would like a few weeks' leave, sir."

“Oh, and for why, pray? Are you not comfortable here?”

I began to unwrap my stump, and presently held it up for inspection. “Look at it, sir,” with another splendid groan.

“What is the matter with it? Yes, it does look inflamed.”

I knew it was inflamed; I had suffered quite a little pain making the stump acquire the inflamed appearance it had for this particular occasion, and I wanted him to see it before it lost its color. He touched it, and he nearly collapsed as I let a bawl out of me that shook the building.

“Gee whiz, sir, don’t, for goodness sake, hit it again.”

“Why, my man, I barely touched it.”

“Oh! Oh! Oh!” I moaned.

“You will have to go back to the hospital,” said he.

This did not suit me a bit, and I thought I had shammed too realistically.

“But, sir, I have people in England, and they’d look after me fine.”

"Where do they live?"

"Derbyshire, sir."

"Hm! Can you get the best of medical attention there?"

"Why yes, sir. There is a military hospital within ten minutes' walk of my home." (It was twenty minutes by road, and an hour by car.)

"Your mother lives there?"

"Yes, sir."

He turned to the acting clerk.

"Write this man an indefinite furlough."

I nearly forgot to keep my look of agony in my delight, for that meant at least a month

"You must report every day to the hospital there."

"All right, sir." (I just went once to square it with the matron, whom I knew.)

In my excitement and joy I was almost out of the room before I remembered I was a very sick man. However, the day was saved by a really marvelous yell of pain I managed to emit as I was crutching out of the door.

My journey home was one long series of ex-



FEELING GOOD IN BLIGHTY.





amples of the treatment of the women of England to their fighting men. I had to make two changes of trains and on both occasions I was literally carried by those tireless women from one train to the other. Nothing but the most luxurious traveling was good enough for me. In fact, I really was ashamed of myself, for the little sacrifice I had made was a drop in the ocean compared to that of many men in all parts of the land.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

### HOME

**H**OME at last. As before, no wild hurling of ourselves into each others' arms, but just a prosaic question from my mother:

"Well, how are you, laddie?"

"Feeling fine. Got anything to eat, Mater?"

Thus was all emotion covered.

My father came in the morning to see me. I tried just for fun to surprise him into some display of emotion by suddenly slipping out in front of him. I did not know the real Englishman till then. All he did was to pale a little, and then, coolly eyeing me from head to foot, he remarked, "They didna get thee after all."

"No, Dad, I got away very lucky."

"Tha did; let's go and hae a look round."

Just like that grim old land today. No fuss, no braggadocio, just a quiet, grim resolution to see it

through without wasting time on any heroics. Thus are the English misunderstood. Self-effacement is not comprehended by some people, and they mistake the quiet of the Old Land for lethargy, and believe that damnable lie manufactured so skilfully by German propagandists about the quitting Britisher. When the history of the war is really written, if other nations will be fair and forget their inherent prejudice toward the British, they will understand something of what they have done for the cause of humanity in this War of Wars.

## EPILOGUE

**I** CANNOT let this opportunity pass without a final word to the man, who, if he is of proper age and physically fit, has not, as yet, for some reason or other, come forward prepared if necessary to make the sovereign sacrifice for the cause of human liberty and those ideals which are our blessed heritage, and for which our fathers fought and bled and died.

It may be that some put forward as the reason for their staying out of khaki that the pay allotted them, together with the governmental allowance, does not admit of their families living in the same circumstances of comfort which they have been accustomed to enjoy; it may be there is someone who is helpless, depending on your effort for support; perhaps it is a fear that your business will suffer from your absence, as no one can care for it with the same practical efficiency as

you yourself; or it may be that the fear of bodily injury — wounds or death — has deterred you from getting into the ranks.

If any of these be the cause and there is any human way of surmounting the obstacle, in the name of everything that the honor of freemen holds sacred, rouse your sleeping manhood and remove the obstacle. By all that you hold dear, do not go through life branded with the abominable taint of *slacker*. Even if death should befall, it is unutterably more worthy to die serving the cause of all men, than to live in the ever-present consciousness of duty undone, solely because you are a coward.

If it should be your lot to receive a wound, serious or slight, or come through the fire unscathed, you will not then have to “hold your manhood cheap whilst any speaks” who fought with us in France.

Of course if your moral turpitude is of such a low order that the preservation of your life and limbs is of vastly more importance than any other consideration whatsoever, then there is no appeal

of mine, or anyone else's, that can pierce your hide of self-satisfied consciousness. But I trust it will be my good fortune that none such will read this tale.

The aims and ambitions of the German high command, which have permeated the entire German nation, and which have caused them to prepare for this war for generations, and waged with a scientific brutality that out-Herods Herod—formulating and carrying out excesses, that in point of exquisite torture and overwhelming number, surpass the dreams of any ancient or modern potentate of fiendishness, has made them an outcast among the nations of earth that have for their ideal of citizenship the undying pronouncement of the constitution of the Greatest Republic—that all men are endowed with an equal right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Therefore, I say, with all the earnestness that is in me, to you who have not settled this thing in your conscience, think what it means for you and your children and your children's children if through any mischance, the Fates should decree a victory

in this war for the Teutons! Do not, I beseech you, lull yourself into a state of torpid inactivity with the idea that there are plenty of men to do the fighting without making it necessary for you to take the risk. If most of the men took that attitude, it would only be a question of time, and not a very long time, when the Hun would be knocking at our gates in America. Can you imagine anything worse that could befall the world?

And to those who cannot possibly go to the firing line by reason of physical infirmities or age, or other reasons, there are numberless ways in which you can assist the great work; there are many things to be done at home which are just as necessary as the fighting in the front line trench.

To my mind one of the most important things to be done here is to put the quietus once and for all upon the disloyal tendencies of several citizens whose sympathies are avowedly ranged alongside the Central Powers.

It is almost incomprehensible to think that any man, or set of men, who have made not only a comfortable living, but amassed fortunes in this

land, and have enjoyed the freedom of our institutions and our laws, should avail themselves of the protection given them by that very freedom and those very laws to undermine the power of the land they have sworn to defend. Yet, such is the fact. They are so short-sighted and their skulls are so thick that they cannot discern the difference between freedom of thought and action, and German Kultur or German efficiency.

It is not necessary to enter into a dissertation here upon the German point of view, because those who read this book have, I take it, long since settled in their minds the absolute unrighteousness of the German proposition and the corresponding righteousness of that for which the Allies are contending, and if by chance the tale should fall into the hands of any of the proponents of Kultur, they would not understand the explanation if I made it.

So, I say, if any of these human snakes cross your path and their traitorous activities, either through the spoken word or the disloyal action, come under your observation, it is just as vital,



if not more so, that you take the necessary steps to see that it is not repeated as it is to perform any other service for the cause.

In conclusion, let me say to you, prospective fighting men who have not yet signed up, and I say it in all humbleness of spirit and with a deep sense of regret that I was not permitted to do more than I did, that if I had it to do over again and knew beforehand that I was going to be maimed, as I have been, I would still go and thank God for the opportunity of going.









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